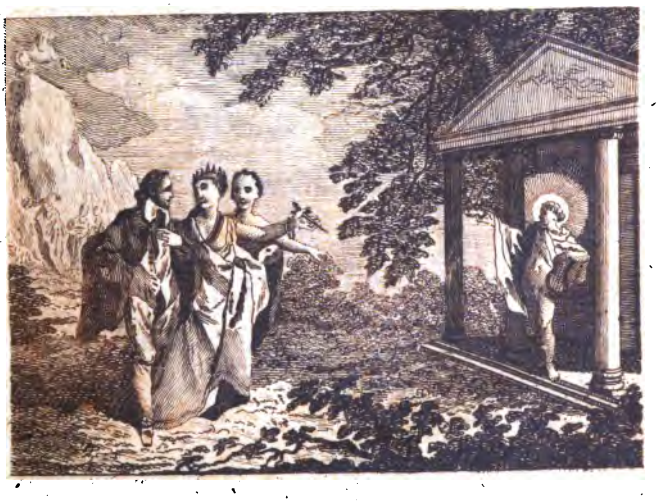
A GENERAL VIEW OF THE STAGE.

By Mr. WILKES.

TENTANDA VIA EST.



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MDCCLIX.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

GARRET, LORD MORNINGTON,

THIS GENERAL VIEW
OF THE STAGE

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH

THE GREATEST RESPECT,

BY HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST HUMBLE AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THOMAS WILKES.

PREFACE.

THE following ſheets were at firſt intended by the author for his private amuſement, and the entertainment of a few friends; and it is to their kind partiality, rather than his own judgment, that the publication is now owing. He imagines, however, that it may be an agreeable entertainment to thoſe who have not had opportunities of enquiring into the nature of that pleaſure which is derived from theatrical entertainments, and ſerve as a direction or information to ſuch as apply their talents to the Stage.

The characters he has attempted to draw of a few of the principal performers, are the reſult of private, but he hopes impartial, obſervation. If he has erred in any particular, he

will very readily acknowledge, and retract his miſtake; as he is certain, that neither malevolence or any particular attachment have influenced him.

He does not offer this as a finiſhed performance. He is convinced, that firſt attempts ſeldom reach perfection; and that this has too many inaccuracies to aſſume that character. But as it ſeems to be a more regular deſign than has yet appeared on the ſubject, he hopes that it may be an inducement to abler pens to follow his example, and fill up the outline he has attempted; and that the critically impartial will excuſe his deficiencies for the candour of his intention. In that confidence he ſubmits it to the public peruſal.

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A GENERAL VIEW OF THE STAGE.

CHAP. I.

Definition of the Stage; its use to Society; the disadvantages under which it labours.

ONE of the most celebrated writers of the last age, in his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, has defined a play to be "a just "and lively image of human nature, represent- "ing its passions and humours, the changes of "fortune to which it is subject, for the de- "light and instruction of mankind." This is a just [illegible]on, and we are more obliged to him for it, when we remember it is what Aristotle and Horace, notwithstanding the pains they have taken with the Theatre, have

forgotten to leave us. Certainly the Theatre, whether viewed in a tragic or comic light, is a lively picture of the human paſſions: the firſt repreſents ſubjects that are in themſelves grand and above the common ſphere; the laſt laſhes at the vanity of the general world, the elbowed crowd of mortals: here you laugh at the intrigues and follies of the city dame; the knaveries of trade, or feel the laſh given to abſurdity and ridicule: there you weep the fall of the intrepid Cato; the gallant Alexander; the untimely fate of an Ophelia, or Deſdemona's betrayed innocence. Plays properly conducted, might certainly be academies of virtue, inſpire courage, form elegant taſte, and infuſe humanity.

Perhaps, it were to lay myſelf open to an accuſation of wanting a due reſpect for things ſacred, were I to aſſert, that its influence upon our morals might be rendered almoſt as uſeful to ſociety as that of the pulpit. The Stage inſpires more ſtrongly with ſentiments of emulation; it teaches by pictures, that have the ſemblance of reality from action, what the ſoldier, the patriot, or the gentleman ought to do to make ſociety ſtill more happy: the pul-

pit delivers plain, moral, and religious truths, that conduce indeed to the private emolument of the peasant; but these are in general already known to every elevated and distinguished character: it furnishes a dry demonstration of our duty; but the former governs the mind by attaching the heart, and alarming the passions; it shews pride in contention with desire, fear opposed to ambition, shame set against folly; and balances human nature. From a Theatre seasonably and judiciously conducted, the greatest and most noble advantages might descend upon the people: and this seemed to be the sense of cardinal Richlieu, who in France raised and protected it to the last. Instances may be deduced from history, of the prevalence and force of well penned arguments, which tho' but dumb oratory, have heretofore imprinted hatred; inflamed and directed the passions even against truth and common sense. But these effects fall far short of the glowing consequences of eloquence, of a free delivery, a spirited action, a feeling of the subject; it is here popular fury is raised; or the wild tumult soothed; it is here virtue may be enforced; and vice with all its arts put to flight.

But how faint is the power of the writer, the perſuaſion of the orator, when weighed againſt the ſtrength of the ſtage; there we are truly animated: there we impreſs not on our memories barely, but on our hearts, ideas that intermixing with, become of a ſimilar ſubſtance with the paſſions: thoſe arguments which had but voice from the orator, catch from the actor exiſtence, and glow with life. Warmed by the ſtrength of character, we almoſt poſſeſs it, and are tranſported beyond ourſelves. The calm Brutus furniſhes us with fortitude; the faithful Edgar infuſes loyalty; the tender Romeo fills with compaſſion; and Orlando's care of old Adam, inſpires with generoſity. Thus the nobleſt ſentiments taking root in pleaſure, a moſt grateful ſoil, enlarge their bounds, and rely on reaſon as their ſupport. "We are here humanized," ſays Aaron Hill, "without ſuffering; we become acquainted with the manners of nations, acquire a fine poliſh without travelling; and without the trouble of ſtudy imbibe the moſt pleaſing, the moſt uſeful leſſons."

Example is the ſtrongeſt argument in philoſophy; and dramatic poeſy aſſumes almoſt all

all the force of ſuch examples as are furniſhed by real life. *Longum iter per precepta, breve & efficax per exempla*; "Example, ſays Seneca, "is a method of inſtruction ſhorter and more "efficacious than precept." Cruſaz obſerves upon this maxim, that example, indeed, affords a more effectual, but not a ſhorter method than precept; and that we ſhould begin in the latter to prevent our being impoſed upon by the former. From the opinions of theſe two philoſophers, we may infer, that example and precept blended, conſtitute the trueſt method of inſtruction; and they can only be blended upon the ſtage.

The moſt celebrated characters of all ages and nations, the moſt remarkable events lie open to the creative genius of the dramatic poet, under whoſe hands they riſe to light, with additional luſtre of ſtrong fancy, and harmonious numbers to embelliſh them. Every noble action that can ſtimulate the heart to virtue, every diſtreſsful incident that can touch with pity, or melt the ſoul into that ſoftneſs which adds dignity to human nature, receives from him a brighter poliſh. Under his direction the performer inſpires the before

inactive scene with proper manners, with necessary passions; he gives it by voice and performance the semblance of reality, the force of truth; and thus united, the bard and the player happily hold up the *mirror to nature*, in which each man may behold his own portrait at length; the shades of vice, and lights of virtue being so happily blended, as to force the human heart to acknowledge the likeness, and the audience are obliged from their own feelings to applaud.

We are told, that Alexander, tyrant of Pherea, was so affected on seeing the Hecuba of Euripides acted, that he went out before the end of the first act, saying, "he was ashamed "to weep at the misfortunes of Hecuba and "Polyxena, when he daily embrued his hands "in the blood of his own citizens." He was afraid (says Dacier) that his heart would be truly mollified, the spirit of tyranny leave his breast, and he go a private person out of the Theatre, which he entered as a master. The actor, who so sensibly touched him, with difficulty escaped with life, but was preserved by some remains of that pity he had so powerfully raised.

History

Hiſtory furniſhes many incidents that confirm the aſſertion. If a well regulated Drama is attended with ſuch happy effects, may we not allow it to be the nobleſt entertainment the mind can enjoy, or ought to encourage? Beſides, here the ſiſter arts pour out all their charms, to make inſtruction delightful. To the force of judicious acting, Poetry adds the ſofteſt, the moſt delightful numbers, Painting her moſt beautiful aſſemblage of Colours; and Muſic her moſt captivating ſounds.

The reformation riſing from the Stage may be made almoſt as efficacious as that of the pulpit, becauſe the ſolemn dignity of the latter can only correct, or inſtruct, by declamatory remonſtrance; a method that does not always ſucceed: whereas many people are more open to feel the ridicule flung by the comic muſe upon their peculiarity of character, or extravagancies in vice or folly. In the pulpit, the moral leſſon only can be delivered; on the Stage, the moral may be ſo tempered with the pleaſing, that even levity cannot help attending.

That vice is more afraid of ridicule than of the moſt ſerious rebuke, is no uncommon obſervation. The reaſon is evident; becauſe though we renounce the practice of virtue, the love of it is inforced by reaſon, and a moral ſenſe of ſhame remains impreſſed even upon the mind of the moſt abandoned. The dramatic poet, in his attacks upon vice, is at liberty to ſearch the province of humour for aſſiſtance; to call in wit, pleaſantry and poignant ſatire to his aid; when he has a mind to baniſh folly, by laughing her out of countenance. Thus, with force of genius, ſtrength of fancy, choice of expreſſion, grouping of ideas, and harmony of numbers, he ſmooths the rough precepts of philoſophy, awakens the heart to a true feeling of its duty; and whether he deals in the jocoſe or the ſerious, whether he calls forth the laugh, or compels the tear, he enforces the principles of humanity, and his power is equally acknowledged. From him the characters of hiſtory receive an acceſſion of ſtrength and beauty; and the actor calls them, as it were, into life again, for our inſtruction and reformation. The poet preſents a correct drawing; the actor enlivens with colouring, and finiſhes the piece.

The

The ſtate of the Stage in this kingdom is truly unhappy: the common people have ſtrange notions of its want of importance. Theſe notions it is ſcarcely poſſible to remove: for where popular prejudice has reigned ſo long as to obtain the ſanction of hereditary right, reaſon languiſhes in a ſtate of captivity; the intellects are manacled; judgment driven into exile. In this caſe, great muſt be the abilities that can awake the ſlumbering ſenſes, break the fetters of prepoſſeſſion, and ſo far clear the mind, that every object may be viewed in a diſtinct and impartial light.

In various nations, in different ages, the character of the Stage has been variouſly repreſented, but ſeldom, very ſeldom, impartially. Nor is it any deviation from truth, to affirm, that no one inſtitution whatever has been treated with ſo much undeſerved ſeverity. The immorality wherewith it has been principally charged, will ſubject me, I doubt not, to cenſure from prejudice and enthuſiaſm, for having profanely compared it to the pulpit: but if I ſtand acquitted in the eyes of judg-

judgment, taſte, and learning, I ſhall think myſelf ſafe from the arrows of detraction. The objection of immorality is eaſily, is commonly made; but it is hard, nay, impoſſible to ſupport it, unleſs you would chuſe to condemn the whole, becauſe a very ſmall part ſacrifices to folly and vice. As well might it be urged, that the art of Printing ſhould be utterly aboliſhed, becauſe the preſs has at ſome times belched out blaſphemy, treaſon, and detraction: the art of Painting deſtroyed, becauſe it has been proſtituted to infamous purpoſes; and Muſic utterly ſuppreſſed, becauſe worked up to a ſpirit of frenzy, by the ſkill of Timotheus, the pupil of Ariſtotle, fired Perſepolis, if the ſtory deſerves credit. As it is beyond diſpute, that the number of pieces, daily exhibited afford ſalutary leſſons to all degrees of people, leſſons whoſe tendency amount to as much efficacy as any friends of ſociety can wiſh, the Stage ſhould at length be admitted to triumph over the clamours of prejudice, the rage of enthuſiaſm, and to be founded upon the *utile dulce* of Horace.

We

We have already granted, that ſome ſcenes are of a tendency too laſcivious for modeſt ears; that they are apt to miſlead reaſon, and excite irregular paſſions. But inveteracy has multiplied the number of theſe pieces far beyond the bounds of reality; at the ſame time giving ſuch harſh, ſuch invidious colouring to thoſe that actually exiſt, that the man who does not chuſe to give himſelf the trouble of examining, will be apt to credit the abuſe, and condemn the abuſed. To cavil at an inſtitution becauſe ſome ill conſequences may enſue from its toleration, is a mark of great weakneſs; a proof of a very ſuperficial knowledge of life. In life there is not, there cannot be any abſolute perfection. The moſt chaſte, the moſt unimpaſſioned mind, will, at ſome time or other harbour ideas that claſh with virtue. The moſt prudent men are often guilty of capital errors; and the devouteſt may ſlip from the paths of virtue; the wiſeſt legiſlators have proved their fallibility by leaving ſomething for amendment, which eſcaped their penetration; and thro' all degrees of human invention, there runs a ſtrain of imperfection: why then ſhall the ſtage be particularly ſtigmatized,

only

only for ſharing in the common deficiencies of all human inſtitutions?

Some foes to the Drama oppoſe it as pernicious to the middling rank of people: but this objection ſcarcely deſerves an anſwer. People of all ranks require ſome recreation; and as long as this very rational one comes within the compaſs of their purchaſe, it is ſurely preferable to gaming and drinking. As ſome creatures, from the natural conſtruction of their parts, extract poiſon from the moſt ſalutary plants, ſo may the depravity and proſtitution of a vicious imagination derive pernicious principles from the beſt morals; as the ſcripture only afforded the earl of Rocheſter a ſubject of ridicule. But to urge the ſuppreſſion of the Theatre from ſuch argumentation, confutes itſelf; with the ſame propriety it may be ſaid, that criminal laws ſhould be expunged, becauſe a miſtaken application of them has ſometimes reached innocence.

"If the Theatre," ſays La Motte, in his ingenious eſſay on Poetry and Painting, "were "to be ſhut up, the Stage wholly ſilenced and "ſuppreſſed, I believe the world, as bad as it "is

"is now, would be then ten times more wick-
"ed and debauched." This was once the case at Milan: when Charles Barromeus took possession of the archbishopric, he, out of abundance of zeal and severity, shut up the playhouse, and expelled the players, strollers, and minstrels, as debauchees and corrupters of mankind. He soon had reason to alter his opinion, for he found that the people ran into all manner of excesses; and that wanting something to amuse and divert them, they committed the most horrid crimes by way of pastime. It was on this account he repented of his edict, recalled the banished players, and granted them a free use and liberty of the Stage. But without recurring to the Italian history for a proof of the hatred which ignorance and vice, when they sway, have to the Stage, we shall find a strong one at home; and it has been justly remarked, that during the reign of anarchy and Oliver, it was prosecuted with enthusiastic violence.

In affirming that vicious or ridiculous characters are exhibited with any other view thanto expose or render them contemptible; the design of the poet is either mistaken, or misre-

misrepresented; for by judiciously contrasting the virtuous and the vicious, there are lights reflected upon the former, that render them more amiable and alluring; a shade of horror and detestation is cast over the latter. Thus, according to its original institution, the Stage may be made to answer the most useful ends of society; when it swerves from this, it deviates from its first intended usefulness, it loses of its perfection.

It cannot be denied, that sometimes the dramatic poet draws characters of such a nature, that he must repent of them in his cooler moments. But this abuse of Thalia happens only in two cases: either when the poet is naturally of a profligate disposition, or when necessity obliges him to stoop to please the taste of an age, of whose elegance and virtue we cannot greatly boast. The man who has used himself long to drinking wine to excess, will in time find himself obliged to have recourse to stronger liquors for the preserving his stomach in a proper tone. Thus, when looseness and immorality has for some time reigned with absolute dominion; the decency and elegance which were its precursors, are at length

length laid aſide, and groſſneſs and extravagance introduced in their place. This was the ſtate of England in the eaſy reign of Charles II. whoſe ſcepter was ſwayed by wit and wantonneſs. Buckingham then altered the Chances, a play that every well-wiſher to the Drama muſt wiſh had never been written. Southern wrote ſome comedies, in which his jeſts are too broad, his double entendres too plain not to call a bluſh into the face of modeſty. Buckingham, naturally a debauchee, rejoiced in his thus diſgracing the Stage. Southern, a man of a very different turn, was forced to write for bread: had he not written in this ſtrain, he muſt have ſtarved; yet he thought a very long life too ſhort to repent of this proſtitution of genius, to which he was compelled by the depraved taſte of his audiences.

Vice is of a contagious nature: the people in this reign caught it from the court, and the diſorder became general, while virtue and good ſenſe fled from the blaſted air. "Nothing "now," ſays Cibber in his Apology, "could "be too looſe or too low for the court;" and the *London Cuckolds*, the moſt rank play that ever ſucceeded, was then in the higheſt favour.

vour. We have ſeen in our time, this ſhame to the Britiſh ſtage, keep its ſtation, and conſtantly appear on the lord-mayor's day, till Taſte and Garrick joining, among other reformations, baniſhed it. Let me remark, to Rich's honour, that much about the ſame time, wherein ſo much was done at Drury-lane, for Virtue and the Stage; the *Rover*, or *Baniſhed Cavalier* was revived at Covent-garden, which is one continued tale of bawdery; and in which a man appears ſtripped to his ſhirt, and ſtepping into bed to a whore. Can we, without regret, look back to the times of which we have been ſpeaking, and ſee ſo much genuine wit and humour exhauſted in the ſervice of vice, ſuch ſhining talents proſtituted to ſuch infamous ends? Can we, without grief, behold men of ſuch genius, as Buckingham and Rocheſter, ſquandering the fortunes of kings in the gratifications of irregular appetites, without giving any attention to indigent merit, unleſs they found their vices flattered; and the greateſt abilities proſtituted to popular depravity. Had the wit, the humour, the talents which in theſe days were laviſhed in the ſervice of folly and obſcenity, been expended in the cauſe of virtue, what noble ornament had been now bequeathed,

queathed to the Theatre. But, alas! Mr. Johnſon has elegantly obſerved, that

Intrigue was plot, obſcenity was wit.

Guthrie ſays, that "Shakeſpeare brought the ſame men on the Stage whom he ſaw in the world." If the truth of this affirmation be allowed, good ſenſe and virtue were in his days more faſhionable than in ours; and hence did he derive, in part at leaſt, the lively colouring of his ſtile, the ſentiment diffuſed through his matter, and the propriety of his manners. This is a whimſical ſort of tenet; but when Shakeſpeare is the ſubject, we may allow ſome people to be ſingular, and let that ſingularity paſs as ſterling judgment. But we cannot ſubſcribe with implicit faith to this writer's aſſertion, being of opinion that the world is now very little better or worſe than it was two thouſand years ſince; and that had Shakeſpeare lived in any age, his talents would have taught him to have followed nature as he has done, and ſhe is always the ſame; yet if the writings of that inimitable father of our Drama are a proof of the purity of the times in which he lived, we can produce ſpecimens of good ſenſe,

chaſtity of ſtile, and exactitude of character in Addiſon, Steel, and poor abuſed Cibber, that will beſpeak the good opinion of future ages in behalf of ours.

A mean ſcribbler, in a work which few people have ſeen, and ſtill fewer read, after declaiming againſt the Stage with all the virulence and fury of a Collier, allows, that "there are to be found in Dramatic Pieces noble and excellent ſentiments; and that it is poſſible to unite a Play wherein all the rules of the Drama are obſerved, and which ſhall be as holy and ſerious as any ſermon that ever was preached; and there is no apparent impoſſibility of getting different perſons to rehearſe it in ſociety." And why not in a Playhouſe? If it be really innocent to write or read a Dramatic Production, wherein can the crime conſiſt of ſeeing it repreſented on a Stage? and if it be copied from the living examples of real life, a draught of the manners of the times, may we not as well ſhut our eyes from obſerving the world? Perhaps, if we examine into the merits and importance of the herd who write againſt the Theatre, we ſhall find the beſt part of them either ignorant

rant bigots, armed with zeal for the deſtruction of taſte; or obſcure ſcribblers, who affect the character of writers, and attack a favorite ſubject for that purpoſe, with falſe quotation, and willing miſrepreſentation. If Collier and Bedford have inveighed againſt the ſtage with great acrimony, have not Zoilus, Rymer, and Lauder, attempted to ſully the character and injure the reputation of the moſt celebrated writers? Yet truth has at length prevailed, and the intrinſic worth of Homer, Shakeſpeare, Milton, and the Stage, will outlaſt ages of braſs, while the fame of their invidious enemies ſhall melt and be forgotten, like tracks in ſnow, or ice in the ſunbeam.

CHAP. II.

Of Dramatic Entertainments in general; of Tragedy; a remark on the characters of the Orphan; the Fair Penitent; Jane Shore; of the modern method of making Tragedies; of the Roman Father, and Mallet's Eurydice.

THE Stage, from its earliest institution, has assumed two different methods of applying its instructions to mankind. These are, Tragedy and Comedy; from them are derived other kinds of Dramatic Entertainments, of which, as well as the antiquity of the Drama, whether Tragic or Comic, we shall speak in their proper place. At present we shall confine ourselves to examine the nature, design, and end of Tragedy; in considering and commenting upon which with particular exactness, we find the most austere philosopher extremely intent. "Tragedy then," according to Aristotle, "is a public lesson, fraught with more instruction than even Philosophy itself, contributing more to the polish of society." "Its effects," according to him, transcend any thing that can be communicated either

either by the beſt books or the moſt eloquent harrangues, becauſe it addreſſes the paſſions:" it alarms the ſenſes; whereas books and ſimple oratory addreſs themſelves but to the ear, from whence they very ſeldom find a paſſage to the heart, by touching which alone man's refinement or reformation is compaſſed. It either aſſumes the appearance of public calamity or private diſtreſs; for if a dignified perſonage ſuffer in the cauſe of virtue, it is a public calamity; and a plague had been leſs injurious to the republic of Athens than the loſs of an Ariſtides.

In theſe garbs it impreſſes the eye, which quickly conveys the living repreſentations to the ſoul, by which they are lodged in the receſſes of memory, whence the iron teeth of time can ſcarcely tear them out. The impreſſion paſſed through the eye will laſt almoſt as long as the motion of the viſual orb, while the precept of the ſchool, the maxim of the pulpit, makes but a ſlight ſtay, and ſoon vaniſhes with a crowd of other ideas that but little concern us.

Who can behold, well acted, and not abhor, the ambition and cruelty of Richard the

third, the pride and prodigality of Wolſey, the treachery and ingratitude of Iago, or the villainy and malice of Shylock? Who can ſee the equal patriot Brutus, the honeſt abuſed Othello, the old injured Lear, the gallant and diſtreſſed Horatius, without ſharing in their different calamities, admiring and wiſhing to emulate their virtues? There is a certain moral ſenſe of virtue, an innate generoſity impreſſed on the mind of man in a greater or leſs degree, which intereſts us in the event of the performance, and inclines us to the applauſe of good, to the deteſtation of evil.

There are two imperfections in the human compoſition, which, in the opinion of the Stagyrite, Tragedy contributes to correct; pride and want of feeling. Will not the heart of man be humbled, when he ſees that, in one capricious moment, the maſters of the world have been enſlaved; when he beholds a Bajazet ſtripped of power, and deſpairing in fetters; the glory of the Eaſt, the head of the Perſian monarchy.

---Darius great and good,
Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,
Fallen from his high eſtate;

On

On earth the king, the father lies,
Bleeding, dying,
None ſupplying
One kind hand to cloſe his eyes.

Who can behold ſuch a picture as this, well repreſented, without being melted into compaſſion, ſoftened to humility, and reconciled to the diſpenſations of that wonderful Providence which has permitted ſuch viciſſitudes, and placed him beyond their reach? When the higheſt ranks in life are thus expoſed to the inferior character, they are a leſſon, preparing him to ſuſtain, with leſs murmur, ſuch diſgraces as may be incidental to his ſtation, and which from compariſon loſe much of their terror. Thus, by proper tragic exhibition, the mind of man is happily ſoftened, and, at the ſame time, ſtrengthened againſt accident, while its natural fears are tempered and worked up to a pitch of reſolution that enables it to oppoſe the aſſaults of fortune, with due deference to the Sacred Hand that ſtrikes. By Tragedy we are alſo taught to huſband our pity, not to laviſh it upon unworthy objects; for to lament the affliction of thoſe who deſerve to be miſerable, is an injuſtice done to nature and reaſon.

In the Orphan, for example, neither the fall of Caſtalio or Polydore ſhould excite our feeling; it ſhould be reſerved for the unhappy father and the injured daughter: whereas the brothers in their diſtreſſes meet only with the rewards due to their deſerts; one being a perfidious, equivocating friend; the other, a wild, intemperate villain.

There is not one character that deſerves compaſſion in the favourite Tragedy of the Fair Penitent, a title to which the heroine has no manner of right; her grief does not ſpring from compunction, but from a variety of paſſions which ſhe is prevented from gratifying. She uſes her huſband like a dog, for behaving to her too much like a gentleman; and, like an infamous incendiary, breeds a quarrel between him and an honeſt man, who, through an equal attachment to her and honeſty, endeavours to bring her back to her duty, and make her lead an eaſy life with a fond huſband. The laſt character is indeed ſo clouded by the vivacity of Lothario, the ſpirit of Caliſta; the grief of Sciolto, and the ſtoic gravity of Horatio, that we have ſcarcely room to take any notice

notice of him, even when he is on the Stage. In ſhort, the characters wherewith we are any way intereſted in this piece, juſtly merit their fate; the father for forcing his daughter to marry againſt her conſent; the daughter for being an ill-judging, irreclaimable proſtitute; and the gallant for being an abandoned proſelyte of vice. Yet theſe are pictures, which, properly diſpoſed, might have had a due effect, by creating a neceſſary abhorrence of the blemiſhes that ſtain them; whereas at preſent we ſee the Poet has endeavoured to render Lothario as amiable as poſſible, and the fall of him and Caliſta highly diſtreſsful.

There is another living Play of Mr. Rowe's; I ſay another, becauſe, theſe two excepted, his Dramatic Pieces breathe only now and then; which has very different effects. The reader will perceive, without my naming it, that I mean Jane Shore. That unhappy woman is introduced as a convert to virtue; and while, by her perſiſting in the cauſe of honour, we ſee her ſacrificed to ingratitude and cruelty, we are at liberty to weep her fate; tho' we muſt acknowledge the juſtice of that Being which thus repays her former crimes, at the

ſame time that it puniſhes the perfidious Alicia and the wanton Haſtings. In the pitiable end of Dunmont, the Poet has been ſo happy, as to raiſe, in every feeling boſom, ſenſations of ſuch a nature as would incline any one in the ſame circumſtances to join in his beneficence, tho' previouſly aſſured that the thunder of tyranny ſhould break in deſtruction over the head of him who held out relief.

Otway and Rowe, in their Dramatic Exhibitions, ſpoke more immediately to the heart than any of their ſucceſſors. Few of our very modern Tragedies ſeem diſpoſed to this end; in compaſſing which conſiſts the greateſt art of writing for the Stage, where nothing delights reaſon but what moves the affections, and intereſts the ſoul. One would imagine that the rhetoric which ſhould warm the paſſions were now loſt; ſince we ſcarcely ſee any thing but ill-contrived plots, cloathed with cold, meagre language; expreſſions without majeſty; figures void of grace; characters meanly ſupported, and cataſtrophes inartfully wound up. So that were not Shakeſpeare, Rowe, and Otway, ſometimes to ſtep forth with uncontroulable dignity, we ſhould be apt to think the

end

end of Tragedy no longer ſubſiſted in Britain; not all the varieties of the Roman Father could be able to preſerve it a footing on the Stage, but for the exquiſite feeling of a Garrick, which we once remember to have ſeen finely ſupported by the tenderneſs of a Cibber, the noble deportment of a Barry; who certainly, though ſecondary, appeared in this Play to vaſt advantage; for to be ſecond to Cæſar, is almoſt ſupreme honour.

There is an Eurydice in being; the language; the characters and plot of which prove, that there is ſtill among us one man capable of reſtoring Melpomene to her throne, would he ſhake off his indolence, and ſtoop from his bowers of happy eaſe and ſocial joy, to correct the taſte of a cold, diſpirited age.

CHAP. III.

Of the different species of Tragedy: of Lady Macbeth; its propriety: some strictures on Shakespeare and Otway: of Tate's alteration of King Lear; of Addison's Cato; of our feelings when spectators of a Tragedy; and their cause.

WE have before observed, that the Tragic Poet has but two ways of working his end of reformation, by terror and pity; and his means of creating them also are only twofold, viz. either by public or by private distresses. The former of these stand more remote from the common sphere of action, as recapitulating something grander, and does not therefore fall immediately under the apprehension of the audience in general. This distance adds a dignity to the scene, and possibly may create a proportionable degree of anxiety and concern in the beholder, because a body of people are supposed to suffer in the person of one illustrious man: on the other hand, the woes of domestic life, or of a private family, open in some all the springs of tenderness that can actuate the soul, which is more

more open to feel, from ſelf-acknowledgement, the fortune and viciſſitudes of a character that moves upon an equal footing. We ſhall not pretend to aſſert which of theſe two ſpecies of Tragedy are beſt; we can only ſay, that we are differently affected by them, according to their different complexions, or degrees of ſenſibility.

To make our pleaſures conduce to our profit, is a noble and very uſeful leſſon: this is beſt done on the Stage, by blending a variety of paſſions, in forming the various characters, ſo that they may be real pictures of man as he is, not as he ought to be; for a perfect character is,

A faultleſs monſter that the world ne'er ſaw.

Some people are ſo delicate as to be offended at introducing ſuch a villainous character on the ſtage as Lady Macbeth; but if the character be drawn from hiſtory, we are to ſuppoſe it ſupplied by the world; and thoſe who can read mankind, will tell you, that they every day meet with people in whom ambition is as ſtrong, and which, had they the ſame temptations, the ſame opportunity, would prompt

prompt them to run equal, if not greater lengths of barbarity. In this caſe then Shakeſpeare was right in exhibiting her, becauſe ſhe appears deteſtable, and may affect ſome minds properly, by correcting in them the ſeeds of a paſſion ſo very hateful.

It is one eſſential duty of an author to be juſtly acquainted with the age, nation, and character of the perſonage he introduces in the Drama; this is what forms the manners of the piece, and was a knowledge in which Shakeſpeare did not always excel: he is guilty of many anachroniſms, but in one thing, however, he is always exact; that is, in making his Romans ſpeak like Romans, his Engliſhmen like Engliſhmen. This art makes his pieces ſo very ſtrong, they always intereſt our affections, and command our admiration: Otway is happy in the former, but not ſo in the latter.

When a Dramatic Piece has a happy concluſion, tho' all the incidents leading to that concluſion are diſtreſsful, yet it cannot with propriety be called a Tragedy, becauſe we depart from it with ſatisfaction; we feel none of

of that pity or terror wherewith we are impressed when we see virtue sacrificed to nefarious views, or villainy triumphant. For example, in Tate's alteration of Lear, the old man and his favourite daughter are both kept alive, and made happy, while all the vicious characters of the Play fall the victims of justice. This catastrophe sends away all the spectators exulting with gladness; and when we look back on the exhibition, and examine it from beginning to end, we find nothing that can induce us to alter our sensation. In some things it were injustice not to own that Tate has changed Shakespeare's plot for the better: in Shakespeare we see the king bringing in the body of his Cordelia, whom he supposes to have hanged herself: the picture here, with all its concomitants, raises disgust, and rather excites horror than creates pleasure. But Tate, to make amends for his judicious emendations, lest too much merit should acrue to him from them, has left out some of the finest speeches in the character of Lear, which Mr. Garrick has properly restored; and they are, I believe, retained by other performers.

Cato is one of those Plays that, from a double action, sends us away impressed with a mixed

a mixed paſſion; we lament the fall of the patriot, we rejoice at the happineſs of the lovers. The ſtruggles of great men for laws and inſtitutions that bear no very near reſemblance to our own, and with which the majority of the ſpectators is but little acquainted, cannot be ſuppoſed to rouſe or intereſt them to any great degree; therefore, to relieve them from a conſtant and weariſome attention to the ſentiments of public virtue, Addiſon has introduced a love-affair between the daughter of the Cenſor and a young Numidian prince, his ally. This ſecondary plot, he imagined, enlivened the piece, and ſpoke more immediately to the heart, as exhibiting a ſort of domeſtic diſtreſs, with the nature of which mankind in general may be ſuppoſed to be acquainted. Experiments of this nature, tho' juſtified by great examples, are dangerous; for two plots can ſeldom be ſo artfully interwoven, as to produce but one intereſt, but one paſſion. Though this is a taſk in which perhaps this great critic has not ſucceeded; yet ſuch is the tendency of this Play, the noble ſentiments with which it abounds, the ſpirit of liberty and patriotiſm which it breathes, that it muſt at all times be a ſuitable entertainment for a free people, and a

ſtrong

ſtrong proof of the good effects of theatrical exhibitions. No part of it can be ſtigmatiſed with the names of party or faction: its intention is to excite a contempt of eaſe and danger, nay even of death itſelf, in the cauſe of our country; it means to inſpire ſpirit and magnanimity, to render diſcord and diviſion deteſtable.

Addiſon himſelf, than whom no writer endeavoured more at correctneſs, wrote his love-plot for the general view, though at the ſame time he feared it would be conſidered as a deviation from the antient models, and as a parentheſis in the Play. However, he referred it to the judgment of Sir Samuel Garth, who politely remarked to him, that it would be received with applauſe for two reaſons: Firſt, Becauſe it was conforming to the general practice of modern Drama; and, ſecondly, becauſe it was a delicate compliment to the fair ſex. Sir Samuel's judgment has been confirmed by the reception this epiſode has always met with, although Voltaire thinks it ſpoils the Play.

The ingenious David Hume of Edinburgh has publiſhed an eſſay, which he calls A Diſſertation upon the ſubject of which we now treat; but, inſtead of purſuing the point, and communicating to us that pleaſure and inſtruction which we might reaſonably hope for, he preſents us with an enquiry very apt here, viz. "into the cauſe of that unaccountable pleaſure which the ſpectators of a well-wrote Tragedy receive from ſorrow, terror, anxiety, and other paſſions which are in themſelves diſagreeable and uneaſy." In this diſſertation he follows the opinion of Fontenelle, who, in his *Reflections ſur la Poetique*, obſerves, that in regard to Tragedy, whatever dominion the ſenſes and imagination may uſurp over reaſon, there ſtill lurks at the bottom a certain idea of falſehood in the whole of what we ſee. This idea, tho' weak and diſguiſed, ſuffices to diminiſh the pain which we ſuffer from the misfortunes of thoſe whom we love; to bring that affliction to ſuch a pitch as reduces it to a pleaſure. We weep for the misfortunes of a great man, to whom we are, no matter from what principle, attached, in the ſame inſtant we comfort ourſelves with reflecting, that it

is nothing but a fiction; and it is precisely that mixture of sentiments which composes an agreeable sorrow, and supplies the tears that delight us. Lucretius has finely described this satisfaction; and we shall furnish the English reader with his sense, as translated by Dryden.

'Tis pleasant safely to behold from shore,
The rolling ship, and hear the tempest roar;
Not that another's pain is our delight;
But pains unfelt produce the pleasing sight.

To this it may be added, that the force of eloquence contributes very much to those sensations; and that the impulse which we feel of sorrow, compassion, indignation, &c. receives a more forceable direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the predominant emotions, seize the whole mind, and convert the former into themselves, or at least tincture them so strongly as totally to alter their nature; and the soul being at the same time roused by passion, and charmed by eloquence, feels on the whole a strong movement, which is altogether delightful. The force of imagination, the energy of expression, the power of versification, and the charms

of imitation, all naturally delight the mind; and when to theſe are joined ſome particular object that ſeizes on ſome affection, the pleaſure ſtill riſes upon us by the converſion of this ſubordinate movement into that which predominates. Thus the paſſion that may be painful, when excited by a real object, derives a ſoftening, a melioration, from the finer arts, ſo as to afford the higheſt entertainment.

In the rage of battle, or the bluſtering of a ſtorm, all our thoughts recur to the preſervation of Self; and that concern which muſt enſue from the apprehenſion of certain danger, occupies the whole ſoul; but he who *undangered* and ſafe ſits near his little cottage on the brow of an inacceſſible mountain, and thence beholds the havoc that ambition makes, or from a rock that overhangs the ocean, ſees the labouring veſſels contend with wind and waves, compaſſion and pity for the ſufferers warm his boſom, while, at the ſame time, he has naturally an impulſe of pleaſure from comparing his preſent ſtate with theirs, and finding it ſo much ſuperior. Of the ſame nature is that ſenſation of pleaſure which we feel at a Tragedy.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of Comedy; its end: of the Design of the Play of Every Man in his Humour: of the different species of Comedy: of the Careless Husband; how faulty; and how to be corrected: Terence and Steel compared.

COMEDY is an image of common life: its intention is to reform the public follies or correct the taste, by throwing the vitiated or absurd manners of individuals into lights of ridicule and entertainment. Dryden somewhere says,

Of all Dramatic Writing, Comic Wit,
As 'tis the best, so 'tis most hard to hit.

He who attempts it, ought to be well acquainted with mankind, the foibles of particulars, and the springs that actuate their different passions. Unless he also has from nature, as well as acquirement, a fund of wit and pleasantry that may not be easily exhausted, here he cannot hope to succeed; for his exhibition ought to carry with it that force of persuasion, that the spectator should be induced

to imagine himſelf abſolutely in company with the perſonages, whoſe ſemblance only is before him; and that the Theatre was the World.

Comedy loſes much of its force, unleſs we can compare the characters it preſents with its originals; for they ought to be drawn from the groups that daily fall under the obſervation of every one. Of theſe there ought to be a proper aſſemblage, ſtill taking care not to tranſcend the bounds of reaſon, truth, and probability. To this Menander owed his reputation in Greece: and Terence ſucceeded at Rome, becauſe his converſation was Roman; his characters ſuch as were daily ſeen in the ſtreets of the miſtreſs of the world. Terence did not, however, pleaſe ſo univerſally as Plautus, though, by the politer and more elegant of his countrymen, he was preferred, becauſe the latter drew his images larger than the life, thereby making his impreſſions deeper, ſhewing ridicule and folly in a much ſtronger light, yet not exceeding the bounds of probability, which ought to be the comic Poet's infallible and conſtant guide. Without probability all wears the face of falſehood, and

and the performance fails of its intention, when the fruits appear to be entirely of imagination. When our errors are properly unmaſked, and the latent qualities of the ſoul explained to itſelf, by a happy conjunction of wit and humour, we cannot avoid acknowledging the reſemblance, owning the juſtneſs of the cenſure, and embracing inſtruction ſo pleaſingly conveyed.

A Comedy ought to have one main deſign, that carries through it one or two characters in a manner more conſpicuous than the reſt: and to compaſs this deſign, a chain of pleaſing events ſhould contribute, ſo linked as to have the appearance of accidental introduction; to wear nothing of force; nothing ſtrained, nor ſeemingly artful. In Every Man in his Humour, for example, the main deſign is to cure a wrong-headed huſband of a ridiculous, ill-grounded jealouſy; we never loſe ſight of the huſband and wife through the whole Play, until we find them made friends, and the huſband cured of his folly in the cataſtrophe.

Comedy may be divided into two ſpecies, genteel, and low: the firſt ſpeaks the language

of polite life, of which Cibber's Careless Husband is a very fine specimen; and were it curtailed of one scene, which to me is vicious and indelicate, I should not fail to pronounce it not only the best Comedy in the English, but in any other language. There is something too gross in shewing Sir Charles Easy and Edging asleep in a bed-chamber; and though it furnishes an incident that illustrates the character of Lady Easy, decency would forgive the exhibition. The managers of the Irish Theatre, who have certainly a great deal of judgment, have judiciously introduced Lady Easy as if seeing this scene at a distance, so that they are not brought forward; but Sir Charles enters with the handkerchief in his hand, and the reflections that are put into his mouth very naturally follow: the confusion of Edging is sufficiently shewn in her running across the Stage when the bell rings. Thus the plot is carried smoothly on, and the main business kept in view, without the least breach of decency, or the smallest indecorum.

Low Comedy groups the meaner characters of life; it is more adapted to the populace, and rather diverts than instructs; it excites

sudden

ſudden guſts of mirth, ſhort-lived *Laughter holding both his ſides*; while genteel Comedy moves a ſettled ſmile of pleaſure, that affects the mind like the beautiful ſerenity of a ſummer's morning. The comic ſcenes in Oroonoko, the Grave-diggers in Hamlet, are ſpecimens of the former, that will always make us laugh, unleſs we remember the place in which we find them; and the obſcenity of Southern's expreſſion is particularly diſguſtful to a delicate ear. The latter is well diſplayed in the dialogue between Indiana and Bevil; but the vulgar only laugh at ſuch elegant deportment; a paſſion ſo refined, is, in their opinion romantic, becauſe ſuperior to their ideas, which cannot divide love from ſenſuality: it is *Caviar to the general*; and though it met with the applauſe (which the author wiſhed for) of every poliſhed mind, yet theſe being but a ſmall minority, would not have been able to have preſerved it from ſinking, had not Cibber happily infuſed into it ſomething to pleaſe the oak-ſtick critics above ſtairs, who acknowledged their relations in Tom and Phillis; and as the cackling of geeſe ſaved the Capitol, ſo did this merry couple preſerve an excellent Play from damnation.

Sir

Sir Richard Steele ſeems to me to have been our Terence; for Terence was the firſt among the Romans who gave Comedy an exalted turn; who ſubſtituted ſimplicity, decency, and politeneſs, in the room of mean buffoonery, which he baniſhed: he thus made entertainment really inſtructive; and Cæſar, who was as good a critic as he was an able warrior; and, to uſe Dr. Blackwell's words, "a fine gentleman," certainly did not conſider leiſurely the genius and character of Terence, when he condemned him, as wanting comic Force. He here confounded Farce and Comedy; for Terence certainly excelled in comic Writing, if Cicero's definition of Comedy will hold good, "that it is the imitation of life, the mirror of manners, and the repreſentation of truth;" *Imitatio vitæ, ſpeculum conſuetudinis, imago veritatis.*

Sir Richard Steele, who was certainly the chaſteſt of our comic Writers, was reſolved, in the Conſcious Lovers, to give a pure ſpecimen of genteel Comedy; to raiſe an elegant and correct edifice, wherein none of thoſe irregular pilaſters, which he called the diſgrace of the Drama, ſhould be ſeen; no character

racter beneath thoſe of polite life. When he read this piece to the managers, they dozed over the peruſal, and in the end unanimouſly condemned it, "as being too moral and ſerious for an Engliſh audience, and having in it not one laughing line." However, Mr. Cibber, who was a good judge of writing, as well as a great actor, ſaw into all its beauties, and offered to enliven it with the characters of Tom and Phillis. Sir Richard's neceſſities obliged him againſt his judgment to accept of the propoſal: he, with reluctance, ſubſcribed to the corrupted taſte, which he heartily condemned. The ſpirit with which Colley executed his part is well known; and for ſome of the moſt pleaſing ſpeeches in the Play beſides, we are indebted to his vaſt fund of humour. Nor would this maſter-piece of our Terence have ſucceeded, without the help of our Plautus.

Cibber never ſhewed more judgment than in his happily blending the characters of the Provoked Huſband; or, A Journey to London; a Play that will live as long as the Stage itſelf: yet here the humour of John Moody has generally a better effect than the refined

refined diſtreſſes, the poliſhed deportment of Lord Townley; and the reaſon is plain, becauſe the manners and language of Moody fall under the cognizance of every underſtanding; but few can reliſh Lord Townley, except thoſe who have had an habitual acquaintance with polite life, joined to ſome taſte. So that characters of low life are thrown into genteel Comedy to make it go down the better: the amuſement palliates the inſtruction; gives force to the moral and the ſerious.

Maſters in Painting meet with a ſimilar fate; the drolls of Hemſkirke, the caracaturas of Hogarth, will always give more pleaſure, than the ceiling of Whitehall, by Rubens; the gallery at Hampton-Court, by Raphael. The Harlot's Progreſs, by Hogarth, will be always univerſally liked, while his Aſcenſion, in the cathedral of Briſtol, and his Paul preaching at Athens, will ſtrike only the diſcerning few, who are acquainted with hiſtory, manners, and life: the former diſplays common ſcenes, of which every man can judge, and all conſequently confeſs the power of the maſter.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Some of Congreve's characters, whence taken; of the defects of the Spanish Drama; of the progress of Theatrical Entertainments among the Romans, both antient and modern; of the Italian Drama at this day; of the French Stage; of the English Comedy.

WHETHER the design of the Comic Poet be unitedly to instruct and entertain, or to entertain only, his figures should be such as can at first be recognized; every body will subscribe to the likeness of Colonel Bluff and Sir Joseph Wittol, while Captain Bobadil and Master Stephen, the originals from which they are drawn, shall not give near so much satisfaction, because they have in them less of modern manners, consequently seem to have less of nature; for, tho' nature is always the same, yet she often changes her dress. To deviate from her, is to give an opening to censure; and malice shall call it detection, because people form their ideas from what they see daily practised, and think themselves judges of Comedy, as upon this practice it ought to be planned. Upon the cri-

tical compoſition, few of them pretend to determine.

Comedy is a ſtructure, the beauties and perfections of each individual part of which falls under general cognizance, while, on the proportion and blending the whole, they cannot pretend to ſit in judgment. On the other hand, the characters of Tragedy are above the common diſcernment, being aſſiſted by elevation of ſtile, boldneſs of metaphor, high-ſounding epithets, and perhaps dignity of perſonage; ſo that vulgar underſtandings, having their ears charmed, and their eyes pleaſed, reſt contented without preſuming to cenſure; as at a country fair the glare of the Mountebank's appearance, the flouriſhes of his language, and his large promiſes, impreſs the peaſants with a notion of the value and efficacy of his drugs, which are in themſelves really worth little. It does not ſeldom happen that the tragic potion is of the ſame nature; from the parade of the Theatre, it obtains the ſemblance of merit, of which it is in reality void.

Comedy and Tragedy, each of them, properly conſidered, lead to the ſame uſeful end; that

that of inſtruction, by different vehicles: one addreſſes the affections, rouſes the paſſions, and ſpeaks to the heart with ſolemn and ſerious leſſons; its aſpect is ſevere, its reproof tries us to the quick, and often "moſt horribly (to uſe a phraſe of Shakeſpeare's) ſhakes our diſpoſition:" the other approaches with an eaſy familiarity, ſits down with us, and, putting on our very characters, ſhews our follies or miſtakes with ſuch humour and ridicule, that we often acknowledge the reprimand, and are corrected: like the jeſters of old, it laughs us into regularity.

The antient Comic Writers drew their ſcenes from living manners; they grouped a variety of humours that were general, otherwiſe a Comic Character is not truly valuable; becauſe, unleſs it ſtrikes every ſpectator, it cannot afford proper inſtruction. A man of but mean talents may turn a particular character into ridicule, and expoſe a perſon infinitely more valuable to ſociety than himſelf; but from the affectations and abſurdities of many, to compile one Comic Character that may be uſeful while it diverts, and, at the ſame time, meet the approbation of correct judgment

and

and refined taſte, is a taſk which none but a great genius can fulfil. Ben Jonſon has been accuſed of ſhewing himſelf in this poor confined light by the Moroſe of his Silent Woman, which he is ſuppoſed to have drawn from a perſon of his own acquaintance, who had this extravagant turn. Congreve, in a letter to Dennis, has defended him admirably, and proved, that the immortal Ben

Expos'd no ſingle fop, but laid the load
More equally; and ſpread the folly broad.
BUCK. Eſſ. on Poetry.

Nor is this ſolely his virtue: our Comic Writers in general paint from the diverſity of humours every where prevailing; and in this they come nearer the antient Comedy than either the Spaniſh, Italian, or French.

The Spaniards will have it, that they draw the ſources of their Comic Wit from life: but they are miſtaken; they ſee things only at a ſhort diſtance, and imagine, that the little gallantries and intrigues of Madrid and Seville are thoſe of the world. This is the life from which they copy, and it is a life which every body elſe muſt own peculiar to themſelves.

ſelves. They are indeed fruitful in invention, and have a variety of incidents, which are very pleaſing. The reaſon is plain: a woman in Spain is kept as cloſe as a miſer keeps guineas; ſo that the Poet is forced to form a thouſand contrivances to bring her to the arms of her gallant; and, if he copies from what he knows to be daily practiſed among his country people, he contrives that ſome diſappointment divides them even at the critical minute, until the cataſtrophe, which is generally wound up with the lovers being made happy. The Spaniſh Comedy is neither over regular, nor entirely probable; becauſe the people retain a reliſh of the African gallantry; of the extraordinary manners of the Moors, from whom they moſtly deduce their original. Both ſexes, in Spain, would think that paſſion cool and indifferent, which was not accompanied by ſome of the extravagancies to be found in their old books of chivalry; for it is but of late years they have been cured of thoſe romantic notions, inſpired by knight-errantry, and ſo happily ridiculed, though not eradicated, by Cervantes; nay, in the country of Spain, they are far, even at this day, from being exploded.

When the Roman republic was in its fullness of glory, when conquest every where graced her arms, Liberty and Virtue were concomitants of her banners, and the world owned her sovereignty, her rough honest sons delighted in Tragic Exhibitions, and their Theatrical Examples were such as pleased their fierceness and austerity, while they strengthened their natural inclination to war, by which they maintained their freedom, their grandeur and superiority over mankind. These images of antient virtue grew out of favour with the people when the city sunk into corruption: they gave way to Comedy, which was calculated to soften their already relaxed disposition; to amuse and indulge their vacant hours.

Melpomene, indeed, resumed her reign in the time of the civil wars; and even Cæsar became her votary, and wrote a Tragedy. Many of the greatest men in the state did the same. However, she was soon dethroned by a settled peace: Augustus became her master, and pleasures of the most soft and delightful nature were let loose upon her degenerating sons, to prevent them from seeing

their

their ſtate. They drank largely of intoxication: *et ruunt*, ſays Tacitus, *in ſervitium*, "and ruſh into bondage." The Comic Muſe now took entire poſſeſſion of the Theatre, and Tragedy was now and then admitted to come forward; but it was rarely, like a Roman, endued with the ſpirit of his anceſtors. Seneca wrote, in the reign of Nero, thoſe melancholy pieces which he has bequeathed us; and they abound with horrors, ſuch as the age inſpired.

Corruption became, about this time, as univerſal as in Britain before the days of Pitt, and ſhameleſs Vice ſhewed her gorgon head in the public ſtreets without rebuke: it was now that Pantomime made her groteſque appearance, and Tragedy and Comedy were forced to cede to unmeaning folly: the great were no longer excited to virtuous actions, or deterred from vicious ones, by the ſublime examples of Melpomene. Thalia was no more permitted, with her inſinuating leſſons, to correct licentiouſneſs, to inſtruct the ignorant: diſtorted geſticulations, indelicate attitudes, and poſtures at which honeſty would bluſh, took place of ſenſe and wit; the frequenters

of the Theatre no longer ſought out rational amuſements, but merely to divert, and indulge the vitiated imagination with figures of voluptuouſneſs.

The modern Italians are warmed with the ſame ſun; they ſtalk over the ſame ground, that was poſſeſſed by the antient Romans; but they are ſtrangers to their virtues, the traces of which are only to be found in hiſtory: therefore they have ſcarcely any Tragedy; for they do not want to be excited to noble or arduous taſks: their inclinations lead them to voluptuouſneſs and pleaſure; and the Plays they have now among them are calculated to no other end but that of indulging this enervate tendency: they are a ſtrange mixture of ſpeaking and mummery, without any inſtruction, and with very little meaning, of which many of my readers muſt have had a recent and convincing proof in the exhibitions of Burlettas, made, about three years ſince, by the Giardino family, in the Hay-Market: the admirable action, indeed, of La Spiletta muſt have made a laſting impreſſion, while no one that underſtands Italian would chuſe to retain a ſyllable of the writing. The whole family had merit,

merit, considered as Buffoons; and the Italian Comedians are for the most part little better. I question whether the antient mimes excelled them in attitudes, postures, agility, and grimace: they have a surprising power of distorting the countenance, and perhaps nothing was ever more entertaining than the various faces made by La Spiletta and her father, crying, in one of these pieces. A scene of this sort must move the visible faculties of a stoic; and their acting must please, while the sentiment must have a contrary effect. They cannot be properly called Comedies, because they have no regular plot: the scenes are unconnected, and they are void of character or composition. Nay, it often happens at Paris, that it is not much more than the impertinencies of a parcel of merry-andrews, who put their own nonsense into the mouth of the character they assume; even where the author speaks, it is so much bombast, so much in the stile of Hurlothrombo, that you must be disgusted: and, with Bocalini's Lacedemonian, I would prefer the gallies rather than being confined (not with him to Guicciardini, but) to a constant attendance on the Italian Comedy. Let it be observed here, that, though I deliver my sen-

timents freely upon the Italian Comedy, and condemn it on the whole, yet I allow there are ſome fine exceptions to my general tenet, (beſides the Amyntor of Taſſo, the *Paſtor fido* of Guarini, &c.) wherein there is ſpirit, humour, and ſentiment; and I am of opinion, that the pieces of Terence and Plautus were chaunted forth in the ſame manner, as well as the whole antient Comedy.

The French Comedy is more regular and more probable. In France, that ſtrain of gallantry that reigns in their Comedy, runs thro' their manners. Intrigue is a ſcience, and a man approaches a woman ſtep by ſtep: he gains ground by inches, like a general beſieging a town. It is a reſpect which the women inſiſt upon, becauſe their commerce with mankind, the freedom wherein their country's cuſtom indulges them, permits them to pick and chuſe; and, in that caſe, they are only to be won by deference and aſſiduity. This is a vein to be found in all Moliere's Comedies, intermixed with characters of humour ſo ſtrongly painted, ſuch excellent copies from the great book of life, that every body muſt be ſtruck with the ſemblance, and applaud.

His

His humorous characters are neither French, Spanish, nor English: they are citizens of the world, and their exactness must be acknowledged by all nations. There is this common defect in the French Comedy, and I am afraid it extends to their Tragedy, that, exclusive of their characters of humour, all the personages are French, be the scene laid where it will. They fail in manners as well as design, but not in sentiment and fancy: they are as civil upon the Stage as off it; but that civility tires an Englishman, who wants something to rouse his inactive sluggish disposition, and to keep him awake. This tediousness is owing to their defect of genius: they have not the fire requisite to animate, and it is right they should be civil, though insipid; for if they cannot entirely please, it is but just they should not offend.

The French Comic Authors, fearful of stretching their talents too far, do not incline to raise your laughter to too great a pitch, but politely jog on in an easy pace that lulls you to sleep. Their characters are few: they have seldom an under-plot, and they content themselves with carrying on only one design:

they copy the antients too closely in adhering to rule and regularity, while we keep those noble originals too much at a distance: this is owing rather to a want of taste in our audiences, which, could we supply, we should outdo the French in their own province: but we must have various incidents, episodes interwoven, more business carried on than they can bear, and a variety of performers. However, it must be granted, that, with all their taste, our authors excel them as much in genius as our soldiers do in courage. Shakespeare and Jonson are as far beyond Corneille and Moliere, as Marlborough was beyond Tallard, Pitt superior to Louvois.

The English Comedy in the hands of Congreve, Cibber, and Vanbrugh, answers Aristotle's definition of antient Comedy, "that it is an imitation of the actions of subordinate characters;" I mean, subordinate in manners, not in quality; its intention being to lash the commonest vices; to detect the general practices of the loosest sort of livers, who, by a ridiculous delineation of themselves, are to be laughed out of their faults and follies, while good people are, at their expence, warned and entertained.

entertained. Thus we ſee blended in Comedy pleaſure and utility. To promote theſe ends, the Comic Poet is obliged to preſent you with characters in which vice and folly are happily mixed; and it would be unjuſt to charge the defects on which they are founded, either to the private ſentiment or perſuaſion of the writer. It may be imagined, with equal probability, that Hogarth himſelf ſits for his caracaturas.

In the part of Fondlewife, we have a fine image of the unnatural connection between tottering old-age, and full-blooded, blooming youth; and in the Old Batchelor, from whom the Play takes its title, we ſee a battered debauchee, who is an utter foe to order and decency, ſtruggling againſt regularity; yet we know that, when Congreve wrote this Comedy, he was not twenty years old. We have ſtarted this hint only becauſe Collier has made uſe of it falſely and unfairly, the better to ſupport his attack upon the morality and virtuous uſe of the Stage. This reverend piece of inflammatory zeal lays about him moſt unmercifully: he ſcruples neither miſrepreſentation nor falſe tranſcription; and Congreve

ſuffers

ſuffers ſeverely under his hands. He, "who (in the opinion of all good judges, as well as Voltaire) raiſed the glory of Comedy to a greater height than any Engliſh writer before or ſince his time. His Plays were few, but in their kind excellent: they abound with characters all ſhadowed with delicacy: their language is every where that of men of faſhion, but their actions are thoſe of knaves; a proof that he was perfectly well acquainted with human nature, and kept what we call polite company."

Thoſe who are well acquainted with the works of Dramatic Authors, will often find Congreve having recourſe to his reading; but then he adopts or imitates in ſo maſterly a manner, that whatever he touches he turns, like Midas, into gold. His Sir Joſeph and Colonel Bluff are plainly copies of Jonſon's Bobadil and Maſter Stephen; and thoſe who will be at the pains to compare Petulant, in the Way of the World, with Shakeſpeare's Bardolph, will ſoon trace out the likeneſs, and mark the original; yet this gentleman uſed to declare he was not obliged to any preceding author for the ſlighteſt hint of character,

except

except to Mrs. Benn, from whose Belliardo, in The Emperor of the Moon, he confessed he drew his Foresight. Notwithstanding this declaration, we can find him making free with Terence, from whose Syrus, in the Self-Tormentor, he has copied his Maskwell, whom, through the whole piece, he has luckily employed, and nobly supported. Of the Play of the Double Dealer, in which this character is introduced, we may safely say, that none exceeds it in ease, elegance, and spirit of dialogue; force, and variety of natural character: that for plot, contrivance, and conduct; for intrigue and catastrophe, it is the *facile princeps* of all Dramatic Writing. We should have mentioned wit, but that is not perhaps the immediate object of Comedy: as to exact purity, the Comic Writers of Congreve's time were no way remarkable for paying it great deference.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of Farce.

FARCE is founded on chimera and improbability; the events are unnatural, the humour forced, and it is, in the opinion of Dryden, a compound of extravagancies, fit only to entertain ſuch people as are judges of neither men nor manners: it appeals entirely to the fancy; delights with oddity, and unexpected turns: it has in one thing indeed the ſame effect as Comedy, viz. it produces laughter; but it is not a laughter founded upon reaſon, excited by the check given to folly, the reproof to ignorance, or the laſh to corruption. Perhaps, if we enquire into the natural cauſe of the pleaſure we feel from Farce, we ſhall find it to be the ſame that leads women to feed on chalk, and make dirt-pies; a vitiated appetite: but this is ſo common, that he, who writes down to it, ſtands a better chance of pleaſing, than he whoſe refined genius excels in painting nature, and exhibiting probability. It is, however, a ſpecies of the Drama very difficult to be carried into execution; great nicety being requiſite to link improbabilities

probabilities in ſuch a manner, that they ſhall not diſguſt.

We have but very few petite pieces in our language that can be properly called Farces; the moſt remarkable are, Duke and No Duke, and The Devil to Pay. The firſt was originally written under the title of Trappolin, ſuppoſed a Prince, by Sir Aſton Cockain, a Derbyſhire knight, who lived in the days of wit and Charles the ſecond, and borrowed the plot from Italy. Tate brought it on the Stage under the former name; and it ſtands a good chance of keeping its place upon any Theatre where Woodward plays, who is excellent in Trappolin; and who has the art of cloathing this character (though in itſelf improbable) with all the poſſible appearances of truth and reality.

The ſcene of Duke and No Duke is laid in Florence, and its environs; from whence it is ſuppoſed, that Trappolin, a notorious pimp, is baniſhed by two noblemen, who have the management of public affairs, during the abſence of the Duke. A certain Magician, whom the Duke had diſlodged, throws himſelf

ſelf in the way of Trappolin, whoſe ridiculous fright is very laughable; and who is, by the power of the Conjurer, transformed into the likeneſs of the abſent Duke, and bade to return to the city, and take upon him the reins of government. He does ſo; and, you may be ſure, the abſurdity of his deportment cauſes as much ſurprize as it does confuſion; nor is the entertainment that it gives unſatiſfactory. The real Duke at length comes home, and ſome comical incidents ariſe from his difference of diſpoſition: he meets with and collars the impoſtor, who throws that duſt in his eyes the Father Conjurer had given him, with orders to uſe it in time of extremity. It gives the Duke the appearance of Trappolin, and he is turned out of court. At length, however, the Conjurer relenting, makes his peace with the Duke; reſtores things to their original ſtate; Trappolin promiſes to live honeſt with Flametta; and the Duke forgives him.

I cannot ſay that I ever ſaw this piece without being entertained; yet, on reflection, it will appear to want every kind of moral and

probability.

probability. However, tho' the plot is forced, the humour is well adapted to the characters, which are not improperly ſuſtained, nor are the improbabilities badly linked.

The Devil to Pay is too well known to require any comment; the plot is of a ſimilar nature with that of Duke and No Duke; it has much leſs pleaſantry in it; but the place is ſupplied with eaſy ſongs and familiar tunes, which are in every body's mouth. For my own part, I would chuſe to leave the Theatre impreſſed by that gloomy pleaſure which I feel from the ſublimity of Shakeſpeare, or the tenderneſs of Otway; and not to have it diſſipated by Farce: yet it is perhaps a diſſipation neceſſary in this kingdom, where the temperature of the air inclines to gloom and melancholy; a diſpoſition to which we alſo owe the ſpeaking of comic Epilogues after Tragedies.

We have indeed a ſpecies of Drama, which, though it takes the place of Farce, cannot properly be called ſo, becauſe it anſwers all the ends of Comedy, commixing uſe with entertainment. Such is Garrick's fine piece of Lethe, Foote's Engliſhman at Paris, and his

Engliſhman

Engliſhman returned from Paris. This is a ſort of writing of which our Roſcius gave the firſt example, by preſenting us with ſketches of abſurdity and ridiculous characters, finely calculated to reform. His Lord Chalkſtone, in particular, is a capital production, and we are only ſorry to have ſo little of him: it is a character in itſelf alone ſufficient to ſupport a Comedy. Were this old letcher ſhewn in more lights, he would entertain in all; would he not ſhine, were his fretfulneſs to be diſplayed in diſappointing him in amour; in expoſing him in intrigue; in giving him a daughter diſobedient through his own means? The author will excuſe me for theſe hints, to which allow me to add another; viz. That he would pleaſe to conſider our ſcarcity of Comedy, and carry them into execution.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of Opera; Theatrical Music; and Pantomime.

ONE of our greateſt writers defines an Opera to be a poetical tale, repreſented upon the Stage by performers who ſing, being aſſiſted by Muſical Inſtruments, Scenes, Machines, &c. It is a ſort of Dramatic Entertainment, which had its firſt birth in Italy; either from the gleanings of the Greek and Roman Theatre, which had all thoſe ornaments, or brought from the Zambras, or royal feaſts of Spain, in the time of the Moors; the warlike part of which, ſuch as tilting, running at the ring, being left out, and the Muſic, Dancing, and Scenery retained and connected, the exhibition appeared to have ſomething of the nature of this curious diverſion. It is of a pretty old ſtanding at the Italian courts, being uſed for the celebration either of the birth or marriage of ſome of the dukes or princes; and the *Paſtor fido* was compoſed in honour of the nuptials of a duke of Savoy. They are now indeed become more general, and have been for ſome time paſt tolerated among us, or rather encouraged in ſo princely a man-

ner, that common ſenſe muſt bluſh at the review.

There was a time when we were remarkable for rational and uſeful diverſions, before that ſound aſſumed the place of ſenſe; when we had a true reliſh for the polite arts; when we could enjoy and digeſt the manly ſenſe of Shakeſpeare, the correct drawing of Jonſon; until our taſte was vitiated by a corruption of theſe exotics, that are unnatural to our climate, inconſiſtent with our national genius. One would imagine we had loſt that ſolidity of thinking and judging of which we once boaſted; which was the characteriſtic of the nation. This ſtigma is owing to the exportation of ſome of our fools of rank and fortune, who are in a ſituation conſiderable enough to give the original of a faſhion, however abſurd or ridiculous, on their return home; when they are ſure to bring back with them nothing but the follies of the nations they have viſited, together with a ſincere contempt for their country, and every thing of Britiſh growth.

To correct abuſe, to ridicule abſurdity, detect folly; or, on the other hand, to preſent characters

characters worthy being imitated, or to fire the breast with noble passions, is the very essence of Theatrical Entertainments. If the Opera contributes to any of these ends, I will admit of its utility; but this will not, I believe, be maintained by even its most zealous friends.

Can any thing be more ridiculous or contemptible, than to see an effeminate treble-voiced fellow, whose tones are unnatural, and those acquired by committing a violence upon nature, pretend to personate an hero or a lover, without either majesty or spirit? It is impossible for an Actor to move his audience, unless he feels; and we know it is out of the power of these wretches to feel, because they are made incapable. I must own, that when I see that Alexander, for whose ambition the world was too small, the intrepid Cato, the gallant Cæsar, or the mighty Xerxes, represented by a shadow of a man, my indignation is raised: nay, what by a strengthful manly exhibition would have hurried our passions like the waves under the influence of the tempestuous North, has, by this strange appearance, a contrary effect: instead of sharing in

the happineſs or miſery of the greateſt perſonages that ever lived, we are worked up to contempt, and our ears become paſſively admiſſive of ſounds that have no effect upon our minds.

As we are generally ſo complaiſant to ourſelves as to imagine the reaſonable part of mankind ſee things in the ſame point of view that we do, I am vain enough to think all people of real taſte look upon the Opera as I do, and feel a contempt for thoſe pitiable individuals who could make up the ſalary of a Farinelli ſix thouſand pounds in one year; and who think a penſion of fifteen hundred or two thouſand pounds, beſides preſents, too little for a Mingotti, a Ricciarelli, or a Mattei; when a Gray, an Armſtrong, a Maſon, and an Akenſide, ſhall write with all the fire of Apollo, and the inſpiration of Parnaſſus, without one of thoſe laviſh favourites of fortune ſhewing either munificence or taſte enough to honour themſelves with patronizing thoſe ornaments of Britain, nay of the world.

Where the genius of a nation preſerves its ſublimity of character, inſpires valour and liberality

rality, the Stage will maintain its firſt influence, and promote the happineſs of ſociety; the ſcene will glow with greatneſs, and reflect the ſpirit of the auditors; the happineſs reſulting from the practice of virtue, the miſeries ariſing from a continuance in vice, will engage the attention, and ſpeak to the heart through the ear, which will neither enjoy nor pardon the exhibition that is void of inſtruction or animation: on the contrary, when a nation draws towards a period of glory, where vice infects every rank, and depravity makes dullneſs impudent; where the men diſmiſs ſhame, the women forget modeſty, the Stage will firſt be touched with, and ſink under the infection; the Muſic will be looſe and enervate, the Theatre will be no more conſidered as the ſchool of wiſdom, but both tragic and comic energy dwindle into lightneſs and buffoonery. This period Garrick has, with giant-force, repelled.

As we receive no manner of advantage from Opera, the vaſt ſums that are required by, and granted to, theſe enervate performers, is truly to be lamented: their incomes are larger than thoſe attending upon the firſt

offices under the crown, executed by men of the firſt quality. Thoſe who have with ability and fortune ſerved their country for twenty or thirty years, think their labours well repaid if they can procure a commiſſion, or a place of three or four hundred pounds a year for a ſon. An officer grown grey in her ſervice, ſinking under age and fatigue, is ſatisfied with half-pay, whilſt a wretch who has talents only to do miſchief, who enervates and weakens that roughneſs whereby we are characteriſed the braveſt nation in Europe, ſhall be better paid for his power of corrupting, than our nobleſt or braveſt fellows for their beſt ſervices.

I muſt confeſs, indeed, that the dreſſes and decorations of the Opera charm me, the machinery ſurprizes me, and I find the Muſic enrapturing; the whole, taken together, has often the air of miracle, and, in ſpite of all its defects, delights me: but this delight is ſhort-lived; the mind begins to languiſh for food, and the eyes and ears become wearied of the length of the entertainment. At firſt, indeed, the unity of the concords, and variety of inſtruments and voices, muſt have their proper effect: but their continuance palls upon the ear;

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the ſweeteſt modulations aſſume ſounds fatiguing and confuſed; and the frequency of tedious recitatives completes the diſguſt. The ſoul, having attended long without being ſenſibly impreſſed, gives way to trifling meditation; and the time, place, and action are forgotten, becauſe the ſubject and verſes are generally very indifferent.

If the mind be diſſatisfied, it is in vain to attempt pleaſing the eye or captivating the ear; and a flimſy ſubject poorly worked up, though ſupported by pompous ſcenery and grand dreſs, is like a kitchen-maid, without figure or deportment, equipped with her miſtreſs's cloaths. I cannot help adding, that the perpetual ſinging hurts me; and the abſurdity of managing the commoneſt matters of life by way of ſing-ſong, is glaring. Who is there, in his right wits, that ever ſung out his commands to his ſervants? or imparted, in that manner, a ſecret to a friend? Who can hear the deliberations of council managed by air and recitative? or orders of battle ſweetly warbled out, and the ſword and pike beat proper time? Does not this deſtroy the ſem-

blance of reality, and throw the entertainment into a light of ridicule? Besides, we forget the hero or personage that appears, and do homage to the musician. It is absolutely impossible for the imagination to reconcile itself to the sights of a hero or heroine, breaking out, amidst the emotions of the most violent passion, into a melodious air: and I remember to have seen an Italian Opera, in which a woman, called away upon business that required immediate attendance, staid first to sing a song.

Dryden remarks, that the multiplicity of monosyllables, and those too encumbered with consonants, which are to be found in the English language, renders it less fit for Music than the Italian; the natural cadence of which is melodious, the common dialogue perfect recitative, and much more harmonious than Dutch Poetry. The Italian seems as it were invented purposely for Music and Versification, the words abounding with vowels, and almost all, a few monosyllables excepted, terminating in them. It has withall derived so much copiousness and eloquence from the Greek and Latin, in the composition and formation of

words; it has paſſed through ſuch a continued courſe of refinement ſince the days of Dante, who lived four hundred years ago, that it may now be juſtly ſtiled the moſt learned, correct, and beautiful of all modern tongues.

It would be the greateſt inſult to our taſte, and an injury to merit, as we are upon the ſubject of Italian Operas, not to take notice, that Italy now enjoys, in her Metaſtaſio, a genius that does her as much honour as Corneille does to France, or, almoſt, as Shakeſpeare to England. To him we owe a variety of Operas, that prove him a glory to his country; and we know not whether to give the preference to his judicious choice of ſubject, the ſublimity of his language, the ſtrength of his characters, the turn of his ſentiments, the uſe he makes of and his power over the paſſions, the beauty of his images, the ſurprize of his incidents, or the maſterly manner in which his cataſtrophes are brought about. Perhaps no man has ever been ſo careful of conforming to the unities of time and action as Metaſtaſio; nay, that of place he ſeldom violates: if he does, it appears to have been unavoidable. He neither enſlaves himſelf to rhime

rhime nor to equal meaſure. He rhimes ſometimes, and ſometimes uſes a metre of ſeven and often of eight ſyllables. This liberty carries with it a peculiar beauty, becauſe it eaſes the ear of the fatigue that it muſt always ſuffer from the monotony of rhime; and gives life to the action, eaſe and ſpirit to the ſentiment; and the Italian language, whether rhimed or not, boaſts a cadence, and carries with it a proper harmony, which is not at all ungrateful to an Engliſh ear.

It muſt be owned, that, were all the Italian Operas ſuch as his, they might prove an entertainment to the moſt refined underſtanding, provided one could be brought to overlook the tranſacting the commoneſt affairs with a fiddle and lute.

With us, the encouragement given to Operas has its birth rather in blind harmony than elegant taſte; for it is a queſtion, whether nine out of ten of the ſubſcribers underſtand either a word of Italian or a note in Muſic.

From what I have premiſed, let it not be imagined that I condemn muſical entertainments

ments on the Stage; on the contrary, I think they add grace, and communicate new life to the Theatre, when properly introduced. For example: ſacrifices, epithalamiums, and dirges, with whatever relates to the ſervice of the gods, may be ſung, becauſe it is the practice of all nations; and it may be allowed to a lover, or to alleviate diſtreſs, without impropriety. The ſcene in the ſecond act of Merope, wherein that unhappy mother is about to ſacrifice her own ſon, is beautifully enlivened with us by the genius of Dr. Boyce's compoſition. What prodigious talents has not Arne ſhewn in his Roſamond, his Comus, and his Alfred! How happy has he been in expreſſing every where the paſſions! what tenderneſs is there in King Henry's ſong, beginning

Was ever nymph like Roſamond?

What ſpirit, what fire in

Riſe glory, riſe.

What joy and feſtivity in the revelry of Comus' followers; how delightfully melancholy is the paſtoral ſong in that performance, or the

Sweet valley, ſay, &c.

of

of Alfred. We have the example of the chaſteſt Stage in the world for the introduction of Muſic; I mean, the choruſſes of the Greek Tragedians, and the approbation of Horace; authorities more than ſufficient to juſtify them, beſides the animated variety they give to the ſcene. In the compoſitions intended for the Stage, the Poet and Muſician ought to act entirely in concert; the words ſhould be adapted to the Muſic, and the Muſic to the words; that is, it ſhould be noble, lively, bold, furious, graceful, tender, or even plaintive, according to the exigence of the ſituation; and of this Arne is always particularly careful; nor does Dr. Boyce ſeem to be leſs exact.

I know not whether Handel's Oratorios fall under the denomination of a Theatrical Entertainment; but as they are annually exhibited at a Theatre, it is but juſt to obſerve, that he is now allowed by all Europe to be the greateſt Muſical Genius that ever lived: he has the art of finely adapting ſound to ſenſe; of ſpeaking to the heart with as much command as Timotheus: he at once touches the paſſions; and the grandeur of his choruſſes, the

the variety and number of inſtruments and voices to which he adapts them, are inimitable and aſtoniſhing. There is a grandeur in Purcel's Muſic that is elevating, and will always pleaſe: there is as much true genius in the Muſic which he compoſed for Macbeth, as in creating the Witches; and his ſong of *Britons ſtrike home* will immortalize him eternally, becauſe in the mouth of every Engliſhman, and equally pleaſing to the moſt refined taſte, and the moſt vulgar capacity.

Before we diſmiſs you from this our firſt part, we ſhall ſay a word or two concerning a ſpecies of entertainment now in full poſſeſſion of the Stage, under the denomination of Pantomimes; or, Harlequin Entertainments. Theſe are calculated merely to pleaſe the eye, and ſometimes alſo the ear, when the Muſic accompanying the action is good, and indeed it is ſeldom bad. They rarely have a ſettled plot, neither are their ſcenes connected.

Harlequin is generally ſuppoſed to be ſome being under the power of enchantment, in love with, and beloved by, Colombine; but croſſed in all his deſigns by Pantaloon her father,

ther, his man Pierrot, and the Squire who courts her. Harlequin's only wit consists in his activity, displayed in escaping from them either by assuming another form, turning a bed-chamber into a garden, a tavern into a church, or hunting his pursuers with spirits. After a number of pursuits, crossings, turnings, and transformations, some god or superior being interposes in favour of the enchanter Harlequin, makes him friends with his pursuers, and gives him Colombine for a wife.

As these entertainments are of such a nature that they convey no moral, and their exhibition serves only to efface the impression, however useful or instructive, that may have been made upon the mind by an elegant Comedy or a fine Tragedy, every body, who wishes well to the Stage, would rejoice to see them banished, they abound so much with the ridiculous and absurd. The Harlequin Entertainment was first set on foot by a French Actor, who gave his name to it. It consisted, according to his plan, of a certain union of incidents, in running through which he and his fellow-performers (who, if I do not mistake, bequeathed their respective names, as

Pierrot,

Pierrot, Colombine, &c. to their respective characters) spoke a good deal extempore; and being none of them without wit, their repartees pleased the populace, and these diversions came into vogue.

Weaver the dancing-master, whose character is too well known to need illustration, endeavoured to revive the manner of the antient mimes, which expressed, by dumb-shew and dancing, a variety of actions and passions; and to his various characters he gave the foreign names by which they are now distinguished. The first of his representations was made in 1716, under the title of The Loves of Mars and Venus, in which the scenery was very fine, and the dancing just and well executed. There certainly was more pleasure in seeing the characters express the passions in dance, than in running about. As Mr. Dryden mentions, in one of his Prologues, good sense being banished for Harlequin, it may be objected against what I here advance, as if Pantomimes were then known. To this I reply, that there was a speaking Harlequin brought into the Emperor of the Moon, a very ridiculous piece written by Mrs. Behn, and played

in the year 1687, on account of its novelty, with great ſucceſs, which mortified very much Dryden and his brother bards. Entertainments of this nature are fit only for weak minds, which cannot bear the impreſſions of reflection; and the Managers are only excuſable in exhibiting them, inaſmuch as it is inconſiſtent with honeſty to adviſe them

To be wiſe to empty boxes.

END of the FIRST PART.

PART II.

Of the ART of ACTING.

CHAP. I.

Acting defined; general observations on the Art: the essential requisites for forming a complete Actor, &c.

ACTING is the most perfect of all the imitative Arts, as being made up of all that is beautiful in Poetry, Painting, and Music. The Poet can only present persons and things to the mental eye; the Painter, with artful blending of light and shade, mellows and softens them to the corporal; the Musician modulates the different tones and inflections of the voice (or instrument) to convey a variety of passions; but life and motion are derived from the Actor: he unites all the

beauties of the Poet's fancy, the Painter's pencil, the Muſician's art; he graces them with elocution, action, and a proper expreſſion, as well as impreſſions of the various paſſions neceſſary to the character he aſſumes. It is, I think, ſomewhere ſaid by Ariſtotle, that "there are pictures as capable of reclaiming men, as precepts of moral philoſophy:" the Player exhibits ſuch pictures, and has this ſuperiority over other artiſts, that he can vary his piece at pleaſure, and be inſtructively pleaſing in a variety of lights and attitudes; a perfection peculiar only to himſelf.

The Actor is the Poet's beſt means of conveying inſtructions to mankind: to anſwer this purpoſe capitally, he ſhould enjoy a large portion of the gifts of Nature; viz. a penetrating wit, a clear underſtanding, and a good memory; with an articulate voice, ready utterance, a feeling heart, expreſſive countenance, a genteel figure, and a piercing eye, which, at one glance, can convey the inward motions of the ſoul to the obſerving beholder. Theſe are qualifications which he muſt derive from nature; but to perfect them, he ſhould have not only a taſte of, but a competent ſkill in Poetry, Painting, Muſic,

and

and Oratory, that he may be enabled judiciouſly to ſelect whatever is graceful in each, and transfuſe it into his performance; for "there is an affinity between all arts, and they are mutually aſſiſtant to each other*." To his polite taſte in the arts, he ſhould alſo add a knowledge of the leading manners and languages of nations, whether antient or modern; becauſe the Drama at different times embraces them all, from the Artic to the Antartic Pole; and if a new character falls in his way, with the forming which he is unacquainted, he ought to apply to hiſtory for illuſtration; becauſe his failing to imitate properly the manners and deportment of that nation wherein the Poet has laid his ſcene, or forgetting the quality of the character he repreſents, muſt expoſe him to the diſguſt of his auditors. "That the orator who moves moſt, is he that is moſt moved," is an obſervation of Quintilian's, which may, with equal propriety, be applied to the Actor; for unleſs he himſelf be affected with what he ſays and does, he cannot hope to inſpire the beholders with ſympathetic feelings, or indeed with any paſſion but that of contempt: nay, though

* Cicero.

he fully poſſeſſes every other requiſite accompliſhment, if he wants this one, which is alſo the gift of Nature, a gift by no means in the power of Art to beſtow, he muſt not expect to ſucceed on the Stage; for feeling is as it were the firſt great ſpring upon which all the other mechanic motions depend.

'Tis not ſufficient to repeat a part;
With proper accent it muſt reach the heart;
The Actor to the audience muſt reveal;
He has the will and faculty to feel:
Mov'd in himſelf, all others he controuls,
Commands their thoughts, and agitates their ſouls.

AARON HILL.

This feeling or ſenſibility which I am recommending, muſt therefore have a large ſhare in his compoſition; and ſome particular characters alſo require him to be exquiſitely benevolent and humane. There are many characters in which he will pall and be quite inſipid, if thoſe virtues are not in his nature; for how can he give propriety to that of which he has no idea? A good underſtanding will always take nature, as a guide, conſcious that her's is the language of the heart, which all feel, though ſo few can expreſs; thoſe who

can,

can, are by ſo doing ſure of pleaſing beyond the ſimple power of the moſt eloquent Orator: for the Actor penetrates the heart, while the Orator's tones die away upon the ear.

The mind may be compared to a muſical inſtrument, which ſympathizes with all that is juſt, harmonious, and beautiful, in the outward creation: thus it is delighted with the harmony of colours and ſounds, through the medium of the eye and ear. Thus where the Poet has painted the manners and paſſions of mankind with a beautiful and juſt propriety, we are raviſhed with the ideal excellencies of his creation: but how is that rapture heightened, when the judicious Actor, hitting the ſame notes and accents of paſſion, realizes them to the eye and ear; impreſſes them on the underſtanding by paſſionate looks, pleaſing voice, and unaffected action?

To be poſſeſſed of every eſſential requiſite of a good Actor, is but the happy portion of a few: if we examine the Hiſtory of the Britiſh Stage, we ſhall find that England has not produced above ten capital Actors for theſe laſt fifty years; for Acting is a ſcience in which

few ſucceed, though many attempt it. Several have been either ſtill-born, or miſcarried even in their firſt eſſay: few have attained even a mediocrity of merit, and few indeed, very few, have reached excellency; ſo very difficult is this ſcience; ſuch a fund does it require of natural and acquired abilities.

All are convinced that a univerſal genius is as rarely to be met with as a Shakeſpeare in Poetry, or that beſt diſplayer of his beauties Mr. Garrick. The great diverſity of characters in the Drama, require a ſuitable aptitude of genius and diſpoſition for their happy execution. A man may be a moſt excellent Mathematician, and not a Newton; a fine Poet, and not a Shakeſpeare; a good Actor, and not a Garrick. He only can be ſaid to be moſt perfect in this art, who can execute it with eaſe, and to whom the tranſition is natural; for in Acting, ſome may excel in Comedy, ſome in Tragedy; as in Painting, ſome are better in ſtill-life than in action; in Philoſophy, ſome Logic, others in Metaphyſics.

This will be moſt clearly illuſtrated, if we look abroad into the world, and obſerve that Providence

Providence has allotted to each man a diſtinct genius and propenſity to one particular ſtudy or employment more than to another. There is alſo a certain peculiar caſt of humour and leading paſſion more ſtrongly predominant in one than another. The general deſigns of Providence are thus promoted by the different humours and purſuits of individuals.

Again: Art is divided and ſubdivided into a multitude of leſſer branches: more ſublime geniuſſes ſoar to the nobler parts of it, inferior ones reach the meaner; yet all are excellent and uſeful in their kind and ſtation, and each will certainly diſplay a greater accuracy, poliſh, and perfection, by applying his genius to that part only Nature has apparently allotted for him.

This diverſity of genius is wiſely contrived to make the union of ſociety more firm and laſting, and that we might be more generally uſeful to each other.

Hence it will follow, that, as there is the utmoſt variety of characters in the theatric, all which are ſuppoſed to be copies of the real

world, ſo alſo it is requiſite that an Actor ſhould poſſeſs the correſpondent parts. Perſonal and mental manners ſhould be ſtrictly attended to, that he may reduce the part he aſſumes to our ideas of reality; and by carefully conſulting the natural extent and propenſity of his own particular genius, ſecure a juſt applauſe in low characters, rather than forfeit all by ambitiouſly graſping at what is out of the limits of his abilities.

The juſtneſs of this remark is obvious; and if it was more particularly attended to on the Stage, it might then be called a copy of the great world with much more propriety, and many of its defects would be much ſooner remedied. It is the ſame in other arts: Raphael excelled in deſign, yet was not ſo happy in colouring as Titian; Kneller's excellency lay in Portraits, but he was not ſo happy in Landſkips or Still-life. It is ſeldom we meet with a Muſician who can perform equally well on all inſtruments: the moſt celebrated maſters have confined their practice to a ſingle ſpecies of their reſpective ſcience; and how rare, if any, are the inſtances we meet with on the Stage, of thoſe who have this Protæan excellency of

varying

varying their character to every thing at pleasure.

Here it may be proper to remark how wide the difference is between the man of real genius, and him whose entire merit depends on the acquisitions of art: the one is never satisfied with the prescriptions of others, but is perpetually exploring new paths to perfection; while the other, wanting ideas of his own, must derive them from the man of genius, and dares not presume to tread out of the old beaten track of example. An Actor, who derives his excellency from nature, will always perform with spirit and ease what his most laborious imitators can do but painfully, and consequently indifferently. It has been a frequent complaint, that many Actors, at their first setting out, endeavour to imitate the particular manner of excellent performers in the parts they most excel in; but for want of equal abilities or discernment, they fall short of the striking grace and beauty of their original, and convert the minute defects and common slips of humanity into the most glaring absurdities. This is as much a proof of their vanity as of their want of merit. Thus, in

Painting

Painting and Poetry, the beſt copiers of Raphael, Rubens, Angelo, &c. diſcover a hard and laboured ſtiffneſs in their pieces, which demonſtrates their inferiority; and the higheſt colouring of ſtile in Spencer, Shakeſpeare, and Milton's imitators, falls infinitely ſhort of their original. The reaſon is obvious; that which was the genuine effect of nature and unlimited genius in one, is only a mean imitation in the other; for though a juſtneſs of proportion and ſimilarity of ſtile may poſſibly be preſerved, yet ſtill the freedom and grace peculiar to an original is wanting.

But where this rare genius appears, whoſe rich donations from nature are afterwards matured by ſtudy and practice, his merit will not only be intitled to, but command a general applauſe from the public; and which is yet more, it will compel from every one that heart-felt, calm approbation of the judicious, which is always paid to ſuch uncommon excellence.

CHAP. II.

How an Actor ought to form himself; the means by which he may arrive at excellence.

AS the diamond, however intrinsically valuable, requires the utmost skill and labour of the artist to unveil its lustre to the curious eye; so neither does genius form a complete Actor, nor yet can the character be attained without one: 'tis study and practice must improve that genius to such an accuracy and perfection as will stand the examination of the most judicious critic and impartial judge.

His first care will be to study his subject and character universally, and enter into all the spirit and variety which it admits of and requires: but it is not enough that he should study and understand his own part perfectly well; he must also be intimately acquainted with all the correspondent characters, else he cannot do justice to the part he assumes. Neither is it enough that he should be absolutely perfect in it: a good memory is one of the smallest, though most necessary of his qualifieations; and to fail in this particular, shews

ſhews the greateſt weakneſs and negligence, and is one of the higheſt affronts that can be offered to his audience.

To do juſtice to his character, he muſt not only ſtrongly impreſs it on his own mind, but make a temporary renunciation of himſelf and all his connections in common life, and for a few hours conſign all his private joys and griefs to oblivion; forget, if poſſible, his own identity. How difficult, and yet how requiſite the taſk! He muſt put on the character with the habit, and aſſume the air, look, language, and action of the perſon he repreſents, till his imagination, quite abſorpt in the extenſive idea, influences his whole frame; is viſible in every glance of the eye, every air of his countenance. Thus all his powers will ſometimes ſwell with the moſt violent tranſports of rage, and again diſſolve away by an inſenſible gradation into the moſt placid calm and ſerenity. This is not ſo much acting as being an original; and the Actor who has attained this has reached the ſummit of his art.

The objects of his ſtudy are the various paſſions and manners of mankind. "Nature,"

as

as Cicero obſerves, "has aſſigned to each paſſion and ſentiment its peculiar air of countenance and geſture." He will be particularly careful in marking all their different appearances, as they are legible in the countenance. Thus, when rage inflames the mind, the eye kindles, and the whole frame is agitated; where joy and ſatisfaction reign, a delightful calm and ſerenity brightens in the countenance; but how languid and depreſſed is it labouring under grief and diſappointment; and what a ſcouling malignity glances in the eye, where envy and jealouſy predominate!

All theſe and many more he can learn in the book of Nature, which conſtantly lies open for his ſtudy and peruſal. Art and learning offer him all the help in their power; precept and example are ever before him; and he muſt want either genius or application, or both, if he does not excel in ſome degree.

When he underſtands theſe different appearances thoroughly, he will alſo carefully note their different changes and tranſitions from one to another. This requires the utmoſt pains and diſcernment, and not many

hitherto have attained it. If he has ſtrong ideas, and only watches the daily occurrences of life, he may, on many occaſions, carry off a favourite look, paſſion, or attitude, and inſert them in the character he would repreſent, in the ſame manner as the inimitable Hogarth can occaſionally take the out-lines of a face fit for his purpoſe in his pocket-book. We have a droll example of this in Congreve: when he was about writing his Comedy of Love for Love, he lodged in diſguiſe for three weeks among the ſailors at Wapping, that, by a cloſer obſervation of their manners, he might enliven his character of Ben. Something not unlike this we are told of Sir Richard Steele, who, to learn the characters of low-life, gave a general feaſt to the beggars of Edinburgh; and obſerved, when it was over, that he had laid in a fund of low humour ſufficient for a Comedy. And Lord Orrery remarks of Dr. Swift, that he delighted in ſcenes of low life; and, in his journies to England, choſe to converſe with waggoners, oſtlers, &c. Le Brun would not have been ſo ſucceſsful in the delineation of the paſſions, had it not been his common practice to obſerve the workings of paſſion, even in a common quarrel in the ſtreet.

The

The Actor, as well as the Poet and Painter, will converſe with Nature in every dreſs. Job-ſon on the Stage may ſometimes converſe with a real cobler, if it was only to learn the uſe of the ſtirrup and pincers: even Apelles ſub-mitted to the correction of a connoiſſeur in this ſcience; for, though he might be able to give a general idea of his figure, yet, with all its excellence, it was not to be ſuppoſed he could expreſs, with ſufficient preciſion, all thoſe little particularities which are incluſive in his art.

Hiſtory and Hiſtorical Paintings will be the next branch of his ſtudy. Theſe can furniſh him with the general character, deſcription, and dreſs of the hero or perſonage he is to repreſent, and the manners of the age, &c. from all which he may judiciouſly ſelect ſome circumſtantial likeneſs or particularity alluſive to the known ſtory, which will give a greater air of probability and truth to his performance.

Thus, if he confines his ſtudies to Nature in general, and to the paſſions and manners of mankind in particular, he will be always certain of preſerving a cloſe likeneſs, and never run the hazard of ſtraining himſelf beyond probability

probability and truth, which may justly be termed Painting beyond the Life; nor run into those unnatural sallies which will evermore render him offensive to his audience, who cannot fail of despising him for those unmeaning rants, which they never can find to correspond with their own feelings.

The advantages he will have in studying Nature alone are self-evident; hereby he will have an opportunity of introducing more natural and lively touches, than he whose opposite poverty of genius deviates from proportion and truth; and I need not add, that it is far more noble to strike out a new original beauty of our own, than to be the closest copier of any other, however excellent in his way; because at best he is only a Painter, who copies from the same original.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

How he ought to deport himself with regard to the world, his masters, his brethren, and his choice of characters.

WHEN the Player has discovered where the strength of his genius lies, and applies himself to that set of characters which are conformable to it; when also he has laid in a sufficient stock of reading and observation, he may be then said to be only properly prepared for his business; a long and arduous practice afterwards being necessary to reduce his natural and acquired abilities into perfection, and to ripen them for execution.

I would recommend it, in the first place, as a useful piece of prudence to the young Actor, when he enters on the Stage, to restrain his ambition by a modest diffidence, and set out in those characters which he can perform with ease and freedom, that he may rise in the approbation and esteem of his audience by unfolding his excellencies by degrees; for thus will he secure his present and future reputation.

It is the misfortune of young performers ſometimes to attempt capital characters wherein great Players only have ſucceeded, and even thoſe by a long and ſevere application; theſe, though they perform with a tolerable mediocrity, yet permit of a compariſon being made greatly to their diſadvantage from the apparent inferiority they diſcover; and they are thereby prevented and diſcouraged from all future progreſs. It is uſual for them to perform ſuch parts for their own benefits; and though at other times they would not be endured in them, they think, as the audience are their friends, they muſt bear with their infirmities. Painful taſk! But when they are habituated a while to the Stage, and got rid of that aukward ſtiffneſs and uneaſy timidity, which all experience more or leſs at firſt, and which is as painful to the audience as themſelves, they may then, with greater confidence of ſucceſs, riſe by degrees to all the grand characters their talents are adapted to; and not riſk their future fame, by making an indifferent appearance in a capital character for once, and ever after to appear in a mean and inconſiderable light.

Let

Let it be obſerved further, that the excellence of parts does not conſiſt in their length, though it is the misfortune of many performers to think they do; and ſo they have a great deal to repeat, they do not care what it is, or how they do it. Epictetus has very judiciouſly obſerved, that "it is not to be conſidered among the Actors who is Prince or who is Beggar, but who act Prince or Beggar beſt." Many inſtances might be brought where ſome of the moſt capital performers have ſhewn uncommon excellence even in the ſhorteſt characters: thoſe who have ſeen Mr. Garrick in the Sick King in Henry the Fourth, Luſignan in Zara, &c. will be convinced of the truth of this. Dogget, one of the beſt Comedians of his time, uſed to perform one of the Witches in Macbeth, and Tom Thimble in the Rehearſal, when in the very zenith of his reputation. Norris was ſo excellent in Dicky in the Conſtant Couple, that he was ever after called Jubilee Dicky: in the year 1711, when the Rehearſal was performed at Drury-Lane, we find his name in the caſt of that Play for the part of Hey, ho! where there are not above two lines; and I have been told by a gentleman who remembers

to have ſeen him in that part, that he always received vaſt applauſe. Powell, who was a moſt excellent Actor, and noted for his performance of Lear, Œdipus, &c. performed Prince Prettyman; Booth played Aquilius in Mithridates, and Clermont in the Double Gallant; Colley Cibber ſtuck to the Chaplain in the Orphan, the Mad Engliſhman in the Pilgrim, and Gibbet in the Stratagem, which characters are now given to performers of the loweſt claſs. We have ſeen Woodward, in his higheſt favour with the town, play a Soldier bringing a meſſage in the Rehearſal, and Theophilus Cibber the Gentleman-uſher in Lear.

It will always give additional pleaſure to the public, when performers of ſuch eſtabliſhed reputation thus deſcend from themſelves on ſome occaſions, and bring a few of theſe inferior characters into repute by their performance, as they are generally paſſed over now without much notice; ſo much attention is paid to one or two leading characters in a Play: or if performers of ſmaller abilities would attach themſelves to ſuch only, and ſeek to riſe no higher than their talents will permit, then

then we ſhould be certain of ſeeing truth and nature more exactly copied upon the Theatre.

However capricious or fantaſtic ſome are pleaſed to think of the public taſte, yet true merit will always beget itſelf admirers, and the ſmalleſt degree of it will meet with its due portion of applauſe; though all are not judges alike, yet what ſprings from truth and nature will be univerſally pleaſing. But it is the miſfortune of ſome who are too incorrigibly vain, to be above ſubmitting to a reproof or admonition; to hug themſelves in their inſufficiency, and cenſure that audience for a depravity of taſte, which has overlooked thoſe perfections they never poſſeſſed, except in their own mind. There is a gentleman of this kind in one of our Theatres, who, when he was rewarded ſome time ago with the public contempt, on his coming off the Stage, comforted himſelf with this reflection; "that he could not condemn himſelf for his performance, as his audience had no real taſte to diſtinguiſh the merit of it."

The Actor who means to excel, muſt be poſſeſſed of an invincible diligence and application to bring his excellencies into full view:

he muſt alſo have a mind ever open to conviction and improvement; nor ſhould he be ſo opinionated of his judgment as not ſometimes to admit the corrections of a candid friend, whom he knows to be ſkilled in the graces of his profeſſion. Hortenſius was viewed in this light by Roſcius and by Æſopus. Theſe great Actors conſtantly attended his pleadings, that they might copy upon the Stage as many of the graces of his action and elocution as were compatible with their different characters. The like is obſerved of Cicero, who conſtantly acquired new improvements from the obſervations and correction of his intimate friend Roſcius. Demoſthenes, though he met with ſuch ill ſucceſs at his firſt ſetting out as an orator, yet, by invincible application, became the admiration of his age, for the life and energy of his action, and the unaffected dignity of his eloquence. Nature was unkind to him in a voice, and he was unſkilled in action; and the ill ſucceſs of his firſt public attempt would have diſcouraged a man of leſs reſolution from any future one; but he perſevered, and was ſucceſsful. It is ſaid of him, that he regulated his action before a mirror, and his utterance by the remarks

of

of that Player who was witness to the ill success of his first oration. Though I do not very much admire the first of these expedients, yet it serves to shew the industry of the Orator, and is a useful hint to the Actor to embrace every assistance and opportunity in his power. An example of the like kind might be produced from one of the greatest ornaments of the Theatre in the last age, who, on his first entrance on the Stage, laid it down as an invariable rule to study six hours a day for three years, besides discharging the usual business of the Theatre. This resolution he has been often heard to say, he kept without the least intermission; and the consequence was, his becoming one of the most capital Actors of his time: for it is a certain truth, that diligence and application will not only improve a real genius into absolute perfection, but also brightens the most imperfect natural abilities into some degree of excellence.

Where a man has genius, if he is endowed with industry sufficient to improve it, it will shine out with admired lustre, even in spite of natural defects. The genius of Demosthenes led him to the practice of oratory; an art in

which, before he could excel, he had three impediments to triumph over. The firſt was a thickneſs and hurry in ſpeech, which he cured by ſpeaking with a pebble in his mouth; the ſecond a ſhortneſs of breath, which he conquered by clambering daily up a ſteep hill; and the third was a weak ſhrill voice, which he ſtrengthened by declaiming upon the rocks near the ſea-ſide, where the waters roared round him like heaven's thunder. I have ſeen an Actor whoſe talents were fine, with a figure rather mean than recommendatory, ſtep the Stage with real majeſty, ſupport dignity, and infuſe awe, while another whoſe perſon was tall, and finely formed, has rather looked like a peaſant than a prince: he has poked his head forward, as if he had a mind to dart it into the lady's face to whom he was ſuppoſed to make love; his figure has been ungainly, his motions aukward, and his whole deportment rather like Prim Stiff, the mercer on Ludgate-Hill, than Hamlet the Dane, or the Wild Harry who ſhook the throne of France, and gave univerſal formidability to the name of Britain.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of Paſſion and Elocution: how to manage and preſerve the Voice: Aaron Hill on this ſubject.

A Poet, in the enthuſiaſm of his writing, very rarely thinks of the particular tone of Voice and mode of Action belonging to each ſpeech of his character: he thinks it ſufficient if he animates it with a proper infuſion of Paſſion and ſtrength of ſentiment, or to enliven it with wit and humour; and leaves it to the judgment and taſte of the Actor, to give his conceptions their full force by a ſuitable conformity of each. Now there are ſome paſſages where the paſſions are ſo plainly pointed out, that he muſt have a very dull genius indeed who cannot at firſt ſight diſcern where the propriety ought to lie. For inſtance, take a few of the following ſpeeches:

In the fourth Scene of the firſt Act of Henry the Sixth, Part II. where Duke Humphry and his wife are diſcourſing, ſhe begins thus:

Why droops my lord, like over-ripened corn
Hanging the head with Ceres' plenteous load?

Why doth the great Duke Humphry knit his brows,
As frowning at the favours of the world!
Why are thine eyes fixt to the sullen earth,
Gazing at that which seems to dim thy sight?
What seest thou there? - - - - -

And in Othello, where Desdemona says to him,

Alas! why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame.

And Lenox in Macbeth,

What haste looks thro' his eyes!
So should he look that seems to speak things strange.

Many other instances might be given; but these are sufficient to shew where the Action, &c. are implied and pointed out in the very description.

One of the most beautiful figures in Poetry, is where the verse paints the very thing it describes: but what avails the Poet's excellency in this particular, if the Actor, for want of a just discernment, or from an insipid languor of spirit, loses one of his chief beauties, and cannot make the sound of his voice an echo to the Poet's sense?

Now,

Now, in comic characters the tone of voice, and action proper to each, is visible almost at first sight; and this may be the reason why more succeed in comic than tragic characters: for as all men are not born heroes, so all are not born Tragedians; nor have that dignity of soul, or tenderness of affection, which is so essential to a tragic hero; but all are naturally judges of humour in some shape, and can much sooner discern an impropriety in one than in the other.

Formerly a turgid vociferation or effeminate whine, accompanied with the most outrageous and unnatural rants, were mistaken for the best display of the heroic and tender passions; but as the established maxim of our modern Stage is always to keep Nature in view, a great part of this vicious action and utterance has been deservedly exploded; and I believe that, for this reason, Acting is in far greater perfection than ever it was in the days of our forefathers. As Shakespeare's writings are the very language of Nature, it is probable, that, while he continued an Actor, he suited his voice and action to it; and as we know he did not care to have "a passion torn

to

to tatters," by this madneſs of geſture and voice, we may juſtly infer, that his judicious regulation of both was not reliſhed by the vitiated taſte of the audience of his days, and that he was cenſured as a bad Actor undeſervedly *.

It has been the opinion of an eminent writer, "that if a Player enters thoroughly into the nature and circumſtances of his part, a proper action will neceſſarily follow;" but, if this aſſertion be true, there will then be no neceſſity of ſtudy or previous preparation, and genius, unaſſiſted by art, is alone ſufficient; but, in the mean time, where ſhall we fix the ſtandard of genius and perfection, ſince judgment

* That this was the taſte very lately, appears in the following extract of a letter from Mr. Wilkes to Aaron Hill, Eſq; dated February 25, 1730.

——— "It were to be wiſhed, that every ſpectator "had your penetration, and could ſo juſtly diſtinguiſh "the different paſſions, and the manner of working "them: no Actor, then, could hope for a favourable "reception, but from his endeavours, upon all occa-"ſions, to copy Nature. But, alas! the taſte in ge-"neral is ſo depraved, that there is little or no ap-"plauſe to be gained in Tragedy, but at the expence "of lungs."

See a Collection of Letters written by A. Pope, Eſq; and others, to Mr. Hill.

ment and taste are so various? It is certain, as was before observed, that every passion and sentiment has a proper air and appearance, both of countenance and action, stamped upon it by Nature, whereby it is easily known and distinguished; every representation which comes short of, or exceeds it, is a departure from it. This every Actor ought to be strictly acquainted with, else he may affix the most unnatural grimace and gesture to the most striking passages, and yet call it natural and just acting. I have met with many who were able to enter into all the spirit and fire of a character in idea, and yet, for want of sufficient knowledge and experience in the Drama, were never able to bring that idea into execution, because he wanted judgment to adjust both his voice and his action; mistaking rant for energy, and beating the air instead of keeping up a proper deportment.

The antients were no less critical in preserving the dignity and decorum of the Stage in the various inflections of the voice, than in the action, since both were regulated by Music; and if an Actor either stood out of order or spoke a false quantity, he was most certainly hissed

hiſſed off the Stage: therefore, that the Actor ſhould have a muſical genius is undeniable, that he may be as able to catch the voice of paſſion as the look and action of it.

There is a natural melody in the voices of ſome, which prejudices us in their favour, and immediately charms us into attention; for the ear is the agent of the underſtanding as well as the eye; and as it is the variety of ſounds makes harmony in Muſic, and of colours in Painting, ſo the beautiful variation of the Actor's voice with his ſubject, is one of his chief excellencies.

I take it for granted, that his voice ſhould be clear, articulate, penetrating, and intelligible to the moſt diſtant perſon in a Theatre, and yet, at the ſame time, to be void of all overſtraining or vehemence, and appear the genuine production of eaſe and freedom; a voice, overſtrained in diſcourſe, is as diſcordant to the ear, as harſh notes in Muſic. A proper ſkill and attention to the rules of pronunciation and cadence, and to the proper reſts and pauſes of every diſcourſe, will meliorate and ſmooth all that diſcordancy and harſhneſs

harſhneſs which he derives from defective nature: but if, after all, his voice is neither ſtrong nor ſufficiently articulate, in vain has he fire, freedom, and eaſe, if he does not or cannot adapt it, as well as his genius, to his part; all his fine action will then degenerate into ridiculous Pantomime.

Tragedy and Comedy ſeem to require quite different tones for their proper execution; ſorrow, grief, pain, &c. require a voice ſlow, ſolemn and affecting, like the melancholy plaintive notes of an Adagio; Joy and Pleaſure, which are the proper appendages and marks of Comedy, will naturally form the voice into the Spirituoſo, or chearful vivacity of Muſic; Love in general requires a ſoft, alluring, and melodious voice; the mellow warblings of a German flute have a finer effect in moving the tender paſſions, than the rougher tones of a baſſoon; and certainly an Actor, with an articulate melodious voice, is more proper for love-ſcenes, than he whoſe voice has all the roughneſs of a baſe-viol.

Hatred, rage, and contempt, may be compared to the ſharps in Muſic, as joy, triumph, and

and exultation, are beſt expreſſed by the martial ſounds of a trumpet.

Hence it is evident, that a Player requires as fine an ear as a Muſician, to judge of the harmony and propriety of the Poet's numbers; and, I am of opinion, that Mrs. Cibber's ſkill in Muſic contributes not a little to her excellency and ſucceſs in Tragedy.

The foregoing obſervations may be ſummed up in a few general rules, drawn from thoſe great maſters of antient oratory, Quintilian and Cicero.

The voice of Joy ſhould be full, pleaſant and flowing; of Love, gay, ſoft, or alluring; of Anger or Hatred, vehement, ſharp, and ſevere, intermixed with frequent reſpirations; in inſinuations, confeſſion, and acknowledgment, gentle and temperate; in perſuaſion, admiration, promiſe or conſultation, grave and majeſtic; in fear, baſhfulneſs, and modeſty, abject, meek, and contracted, tremulous and heſitating; in pity and compaſſion, it has a ſoothing and melancholy plaintiveneſs; grief and trouble require a ſad, dull, and languiſhing

ing voice, grave and oppreſt, interrupted with heaving ſighs and flowing tears; in confidence, it is loud and ſtrong, ſupported with a decent boldneſs and daring conſtancy.

Finally, as an inſtrument, when touched lightly and gently by a maſterly hand, gives a ſoft and tender ſound; but, if with ſtrength and boldneſs, an energic commanding tone; ſo in ſpeaking, if the paſſion is violent, it will produce a ſtrong and rapid pronunciation; and when it ſubſides into a calm, ſerene ſentiment, ſuch will, or ought, the delivery to be.

CHAP. V.

Of the various Paſſions; how to expreſs them in Speaking, Looks, and Action: illuſtrated by comparing Iago with Zanga, &c.

THERE is a ſomething inexpreſſibly eloquent in a proper and juſt action, which words can never deſcribe: it is the language ſpoken by the ſoul, which penetrates directly to the heart, and that undiſguiſed natural eloquence which only is univerſally intelligible.

The beauty of all action conſiſts in its eaſe and freedom; that is, in making it appear to be the natural conſequence of that paſſion, humour, or ſentiment, with which the Actor is ſuppoſed to be animated at that juncture; ſo that, if with the propriety of voice, (as recommended in the laſt chapter) his action does not alſo ſtrictly correſpond, his performance will be incomplete; for an erroneous action will contradict and confuſe the juſteſt ſpeaking; and the mind is quickly diſguſted at the incongruous aſſociation. It is the Actor's

buſineſs

buſineſs and duty then to obſerve, with the utmoſt accuracy he is capable of, not only all the different tones and modulations of voice, but alſo all the variety of action and attitude, which are proper to the higheſt degree of eloquence diſplayed in public, as well as to the moſt familiar converſation, or even retired ſoliloquy in private life; all which, though invariably dictated by Nature, yet may be further regulated and improved by Art. It may alſo be obſerved, that every ſtation of life has a different propriety of voice and action peculiar to it; and though the paſſion, &c. may be the ſame in all, yet the expreſſion and action denotive of that paſſion muſt vary according to age, ſtation, and circumſtance, or as the perſon repreſented would be ſuppoſed to act in real life. Thus Anger, Reſentment, Love, &c. appear very differently in the prince and the peaſant; and the diſengaged air and gaiety of the man of quality ought never to be intermixed with the aukward mirth and clumſy poſtures of the clown. "The joy of a monarch, ſays Dryden, for the news of a victory, muſt not be expreſſed like the extaſy of a Harlequin on receipt of a letter from his miſtreſs."

But to come to particulars: As the knowledge of the paſſions in general, and of the action, attitude, and tone of voice, which each ſpecies of character requires, is the moſt eſſential branch of the Actor's profeſſion, and requires the greateſt diſplay of genius, I ſhall here attempt a general deſcriptive outline of thoſe paſſions which moſt frequently occur; firſt premiſing, that the few writers who have treated upon this ſubject have done it ſo variouſly, and are ſo divided in their opinions, it is ſcarcely poſſible to handle it with that preciſion which might be expected. I ſhall therefore only mention thoſe which derive ſuch diſtinguiſhable marks from Nature as cannot eaſily be miſtaken, as well as I have been able to collect them from the ſeveral authors who have wrote on this ſubject, intermixing my own obſervations.

Deſire and Averſion are the two leading principles of the ſoul, from whence all its other motions or paſſions ſpring.

The novelty, grandeur, and beauty of any object, either in Nature or Art; the properties which it is really, or which we even imagine

gine it to be poſſeſſed of, will excite our admiration, reſpect, eſteem or veneration, love, and deſire: its preſence or poſſeſſion will diſpoſe us to tranquility, joy, and exultation; as, on the contrary, its abſence, diſtance, or removal into the poſſeſſion of another, will excite grief, ſorrow, fear, envy or jealouſy, and deſpair.

The obſtacles which oppoſe the enjoyment of our wiſhes, will, according to their nature, inſpire us either with anger, courage, and reſolution, or contempt and hatred.

If this object of our deſire is attainable, it will raiſe our hope, deſire, and expectation; if removed too far out of our reach, our envy and jealouſy are inflamed; and if it is abſolutely loſt to us, deſpondency, rage, and deſpair, will enſue.

This is a general deſcription of the operations of theſe leading principles that act upon our minds: the appearance and dreſs they put on to our eye, ſhall be deſcribed in the order wherein they have been already named.

Simple admiration occaſions no very remarkable alteration in the countenance; the eye fixes upon the object; the right-hand naturally extends itſelf with the palm turned outwards; and the left-hand will ſhare in the action, though ſo as ſcarcely to be perceived, not venturing far from the body; but when this ſurpriſe reaches the ſuperlative degree, which I take to be aſtoniſhment, the whole body is actuated: it is thrown back, with one leg ſet before the other, both hands elevated, the eyes larger than uſual, the brows drawn up, and the mouth not quite ſhut. Dryden ſomewhere paints this paſſion well by the following lines:

The pale aſſiſtants on each other ſtar'd,
With gaping mouths for iſſuing words prepar'd;
The ſtill-born ſounds upon the palate hung,
And dy'd imperfect on the faultring tongue.

Reſpect and ſubmiſſion may be expreſſed by the eyes mildly beholding the perſonage that enforces it, the body bent, and the hands either hanging down not cloſe to the body, the fingers cloſed, and the palms turned outward; or elſe by the eye caſt down, and one hand laid to the breaſt.

Love,

Love, which is allied to reſpect, at firſt requires a tranquil aſpect; the eyes naturally are drawn upon the object, and the countenance ſpeaks ſatisfaction.

But when the paſſion ripens in the heart, it does not reſt in ſimple complacency and reſpect; it is of a more aſſimilating and attractive nature; it ſwells all the powers with the moſt eager impetuoſity of deſire. Though the ancients omitted this paſſion in their theatrical pieces, probably thinking it a derogation from that ſevere virtue they valued themſelves on, yet the ſucceſs it has had under the forming hands of the greateſt maſters of our Drama, and the great variety of characters and incidents it furniſhes, will ſufficiently authorize its being preſerved on our Stage. And I believe many will think with me, that if a play was brought on wherein it had no ſhare, it would prove but a cold and inſipid entertainment to moſt of our modern audiences. Characters of the love kind are expected from every theatrical piece; as this prevailing paſſion and ſenſibility are what all have felt the effects of in ſome time or other of their lives; and audiences of the leaſt taſte are judges of it, and

can eaſily diſtinguiſh its counterfeit from its real appearance.

This paſſion diſcovers itſelf in an endleſs variety of appearances, according to age, ſtation, and circumſtance, and as it is influenced by or mingled with any other paſſion: the other paſſions have ſome general outlines, whereby they are eaſily known and diſtinguiſhed; here then the Player will diſcover the penetrating ſubtilty of his genius in tracing out thoſe appearances as they variouſly occur.

Thus we ſee the ſudden ſtarts and breakings out of it in all the gloomy jealouſy of Othello. Love was his prevailing paſſion, jealouſy his prevailing foible; and the former takes all its tincture and hue from the latter, even when his paſſion is wrought up to the moſt intereſting pitch, as in this ſpeech.

---------- I'll ſmell thee on the tree;
Oh balmy breath, that do'ſt almoſt perſuade
Juſtice to break her ſword!--One more, one more;
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after---One more, that's the laſt;
So ſweet, was ne'er ſo fatal! I muſt weep,
But they are cruel tears: this ſorrow's heav'nly;
It ſtrikes where it doth love.

When Love and Desire terminate in possession, and when our affairs take an unforeseen happy turn, Joy, Triumph, and Exultation are the consequences. The vivacity of the spirits gives a brilliancy to the eye, the forehead is calm and serene, the lips moist and smiling, and the whole countenance from pale, melancholy, and severe, becomes ruddy and affable. The rest of the body shares in the alteration; the gait is erect and lively; joy attends on every motion; and our words flow with the most pleasurable facility.

Thus Alphonso, in the last scene of the Mourning Bride, says,

My arms alone shall hold her up,
Warm her to life, and wake her into gladness.
O let me talk to thy reviving sense
The words of joy and peace; warm thy cold beauties
With the new flushing ardor of my cheek;
Into thy lips pour the soft trickling balm
Of cordial sighs, and reinspire thy bosom
With the breath of love.

On some tender and interesting occasions this passion overflows, and produces the most delight-

delightful tears: thus I am certain, that the nice touches of nature in the diſcovery between Sealand and Indiana adminiſter a delight far ſuperior to the common flaſhes of joy and mirth felt on ordinary occaſions.

Grief and ſorrow are the reverſe of the paſſion laſt deſcribed; the blackneſs and melancholy that reigns in the ſoul is painted in the gloom and dejection of the countenance; as the ſpirits retire to ſupport the inward burthen, they leave it wan, and the eyes become heavy and cloſed, the head is careleſsly declined, and an affecting ſolemnity is obſervable in the whole deportment. This is the plain ſimple appearance of ſorrow, ſuch as Almeria's in the firſt ſcene of the Mourning Bride, where ſhe ſays,

---------- O force of conſtant woe!
'Tis not in harmony to calm my griefs.

But when the calamity riſes higher, the accents are broken and interrupted with ſighs and groans, a haggard wildneſs, the very enthuſiaſm of grief, is ſeen in the looks, which ſwallows up our common ſorrow as the ocean does the little ſtreams.

What

What is moſt ſtriking of all is the ſilent pauſe of ſorrow, where our griefs are too great for utterance. The

Vox faucibus hæſit.

Or, as Shakeſpeare deſcribes it,

------ *My grief lies all within,*
And thoſe external manners of laments
Are merely ſhadows of the unſeen grief
That ſwell with ſilence all my tortured ſoul.
There lies the ſubſtance.

" Such ſilences (ſays an ingenious author *, ſpeaking of Niobe's ſitting diſconſolate three days together on the tomb of her children, covered with a veil) have ſomething more affecting and more ſtrongly expreſſive of paſſion than the moſt artful ſpeeches; and in Sophocles, where the unfortunate Deianira diſcovers her miſtake in having ſent a poiſoned veſtment to her huſband Hercules, her ſurprize and ſorrow are unſpeakable; and ſhe anſwers not her ſon who acquaints her with the diſaſter, but goes off the ſtage without uttering a ſyllable. A writer unacquainted with Nature and the Heart would have put into her mouth twenty

* The Adventurer, Numb. 51.

florid iambics, in which ſhe would have bewailed her misfortunes, and informed the ſpectators that ſhe was going to die.

Take a ſhorter inſtance of the like kind from Shakeſpeare, who, to make the tranſition from peace of mind to deſpair more ſtriking, introduces Romeo in the laſt act of Romeo and Juliet as in a ſettled tranquil ſtate, in full expectation of good news from his dear miſtreſs.

If I may truſt, the flattery of ſleep,
My dreams preſage ſome joyful news at hand:
My boſom's lord ſits lightly on his throne,
And all this day an unaccuſtomed ſpirit
Lifts me above the ground with chearful thoughts, &c.

Here a meſſenger brings him the news of Juliet's death. The account at firſt deprives him of the power of ſpeaking; the anguiſh it creates works inward; grief, deſpair, and aſtoniſhment are diſplayed in his countenance. At length he takes breath with this one line:

Is it even ſo? then I defy you, ſtars!

In which there is more real anguiſh implied than in twenty ſtudied pages; and all who have

have ſeen that ſolemn pauſe of woe which Mr. Garrick ſhews in this particular, will allow that he does the poet inimitable juſtice.

The apprehenſion of an approaching evil, or of being deprived of our happineſs in any ſhape, creates fear: its ſymptoms are a pale countenance, a troubled eye, a depreſſion of the ſpirits approaching to fainting: when it riſes to terror or horror, a tremor and univerſal agony follow; the ſpeech is broken and confuſed, and the half formed accents die upon the lips.

In the ſecond part of Henry IV. Northumberland thus addreſſes the meſſenger of his ſon's death:

Thou trembleſt, and the whiteneſs in thy cheek
Is apter than thy tongue to tell thy errand.
Even ſuch a Man, ſo faint, ſo ſpiritleſs,
So dull, ſo dead in look, ſo woe-be-gone,
Drew Priam's curtains in the dead of night,
And would have told him half his Troy was burn'd.
But Priam found the fire ere he his tongue.

And when Juliet retires to her chamber to take the potion, ſhe anticipates the horrors of the ſituation

ſituation ſhe is juſt entering into with ſo much force, that we think all the dreadful figures her imagination raiſes viſible.

Alas! alas! is it not like that I
So early waking, what with loathſome ſmells,
And ſhrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,
That living mortals hearing them run mad.---
Or if I wake ſhall I not be diſtraught,
(Invironed with all theſe hideous fears)
And madly play with my fore-fathers joints,
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his ſhroud?
And in this rage with ſome great kinſman's bone,
As with a club daſh out my deſp'rate brains?

Hope is the reverſe of the laſt paſſion; it gives a deſirous eager look, with a mixture of fear and aſſurance: as the latter prevails, the countenance becomes more placid and ſerene, which is the moſt can be ſaid of this paſſion, as its motions are chiefly internal, and create but ſmall alteration in the countenance.

Jealouſy and Envy proceed from various cauſes: the peace and proſperity of others; the advantages they are poſſeſſed of, and which we think ourſelves intitled to and qualified for, will

will give rise to Envy, Hatred, Rancor, Malice, and Revenge. These tormenting, detestable passions have much the same appearances. They cover the countenance with a malignant gloom, the eye is inflamed, and shoots cautious side-glances at the object of resentment: thus Milton represents Satan in Paradise viewing our first parents.

------ *Aside the devil turned*
For envy, yet with jealous leer malign
Eyed them askance. ------

There is a great deal of difference between the malice of a slave and the vengeance of a prince justly provoked; and while we abhor Iago, and view his fall with pleasure, we find something in the character of Zanga that commands our pity. Iago prosecutes to destruction a noble unsuspecting officer, for having preferred above him *one Michael Cassio.* He has no other real motive for his villainy: he indeed in the first scene of the Play mentions to Roderigo, that he hates the general on another account; for, says he, "He has, between my sheets, done me the unlawful office;" and again he declares he will not be easy, "till he

he is even with him wife for wife." But from his deportment through the reſt of the play, he leaves us at liberty to judge, that he has invented this ſtory, the better to help his deſigns on Roderigo, without whom it is impoſſible his ſchemes can work. He then proceeds to deſtroy an honeſt gallant ſoldier, an innocent beautiful woman, a well-beloved modeſt man, and a ſimple outwitted coxcomb. He completes a mean but barbarous revenge, excited by a very trifling diſappointment; he levels every thing in his way, and ſpares neither age, ſex, or condition. When his villanies are detected, he deports himſelf with all the gloomy malice of a ſlave. "What ye know, ſays he, ye know; ſeek no more of me, for from this hour I never will ſpeak more." In few words, he has neither the ſpirit to triumph in his vengeance, nor the leaſt ſpark of refined feeling for having deſtroyed characters ſo amiable as Deſdemona and Othello. How very different are the motives and deportment of Zanga! how intimately acquainted was the poet who drew the character, with the manner both of his rank and country! While Zanga is purſuing his aim, we find him now and then deliberating; we find

find a remembrance of what he was contending with, designs that may not admit of an honourable interpretation. "Does this, says he, become a prince, &c." but then retiring again into himself, he views his present abject condition; he recollects the insults whereto it has made him subservient, the person that has occasioned them. These motives, joined to the natural melancholy he imbibes from his native air, determine him to proceed! At length his wishes being crowned with success, and having triumphed over Alonzo his conqueror, his insulter, by making him destroy his friend, murder his wife, and rendering him absolutely miserable, no more remains for him to do than to shew him, that the man whom he despised and abused was the person to whom he owed his misfortune. Having no more occasion for the appearance of flattery and sycophantism, he throws off all disguise, and is himself again. Having raised the hopes of Alonzo, by promising to shew him the author of all his sufferings, he collects the whole prince; he assumes the port, the majesty of a conqueror, in saying,

Know then!---'twas I----

Now he is reſtored to ſovereignty, his heart overflows with ſatisfaction; and he proceeds to mortify Alonzo, by exerting his ſuperiority ſtill farther, and ſhewing him by the ſteps he had taken to undo him, that if he could not conquer him by open force, he could ſubdue him by policy; and as this ſubduction gave him ſuperiority, no matter by what means attained, nor of what nature, his deſires were gratified. Then he tells him, in the following lines, the various cauſes in which he triumphs.

Thy wife is guiltleſs, &c.

Then to ſhew that he has acted with a juſtice becoming himſelf, he deſires Alonzo to remember who the man is that can thus greatly puniſh.

Look on me, who am I? you'll ſay the Moor.

How noble, how princely is his conduct, when he ſees Alonzo fallen; how beautiful, how finely put into his mouth is this ſentiment:

I war not with the dead.

And in the end that mixture of benevolence with which the whole of his character has been tinc-

tinctured breaking out in his pitying the fall of ſo great and ſo good a man; his being ſorry that he was neceſſitated to work the overthrow of ſo much virtue, naturally recommends him to our compaſſion, and in a great meaſure compenſates for his vices. I think, indeed, the Poet derogates from the dignity of the character in carrying him off as it were in deſpair; and that the laſt line

--- To receive me hell blows all her fires.

were better altered to a more ſettled and philoſophic ſentiment.

In conſidering the two characters of Iago and Zanga, which appear of a ſimilar nature, I would recommend to the Actor to obſerve that Iago's revenge is the ſheer malice of a villain, who has no conſequence to ſupport him; that in Zanga he ſhould take care to infuſe an air of dignity through the whole; to give his fawning on Alonzo ſuch an air that they ſhall ſeem forced and affected; that his proceedings are againſt a man

Whoſe native country has been laid in blood.

This is a character in the laſt act, of which par-

ticularly an Actor may get reputation, if he views and reviews it before he attempts it.

Disappointment is expressed by desponding down-cast looks, a gloomy eye, and the hand striking the breast. Despair needs not a finer description than we find of it in Shakespeare.

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And ev'ry tongue brings in a several tale,
And ev'ry tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in highest degree,
Murther, murther, stern murther, in the dir'st degree,
Throng to the bar, all crying, guilty, guilty!
I shall despair: there is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul shall pity me.

Anger runs through the mind like a devouring flame; it choaks the voice, gives a savage wildness to the eye; the eye-brow in this disposition is let down, it is contracted, and pursed into frowns. This passion will sometimes excite a trembling in the whole frame; and when it swells into an extreme rage, all these motions will be yet more violent. Pope paints it thus from Homer:

Black choler fill'd his breast, that boil'd with ire,
And from his eye-balls flash'd the living fire.

The voice of paſſion is ſtrongly marked in Hotſpur.

He ſaid, he would not ranſom Mortimer,
Forbad my tongue to ſpeak of Mortimer!

And of extreme rage in Othello.

Villain, be ſure thou prove my love a whore;
Be ſure of it; give me the ocular proof,
Or by the worth of my eternal ſoul,
Thou hadſt better have been born a dog
Than anſwer my waked wroth.

Revenge will beſt be expreſſed by a black gloomy ſatisfaction in the looks, if ſucceſsful; and with the moſt violent paroxiſms of rage and regret, when diſappointed. Thus Chamont, when brought in diſarmed, cries,

Gape hell, and ſwallow me to quick damnation,
If I forgive your houſe; if I not live
An everlaſting plague to thee, Acaſto,
And all thy race.

Courage and Reſolution are known by a confirmed ſteady aſpect, the eye lively and penetrating, the body erect, every motion firm, the voice ſteady and nervous. Thus Richard prepares for battle:

A thousand hearts are swelling in my bosom;
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head,
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood,
And thou, our warlike champion, thrice renown'd
St. George, inspire me with the rage of lions.
Upon 'em----charge----follow me.

Objects unworthy of our anger and resentment will yet raise our contempt, or breed disgust. These sensations are shewn by a certain kind of dignified pride in the countenance; a frown fixed upon the eye-brow; the lips brought to a half smile of scorn; the face turned from the object; and the hand extended, as if to keep it from approaching. Thus ought Pierre to receive Jaffeir's address, when he finds him unfaithful.

What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat?
That wouldst encroach upon my credulous ears,
And canst thus vilely, &c.

The dignified Pride, which disdains resentment to an inferior, should be seen in the attitude and expression of Hastings to Dumont.

Avaunt, base groom!
At distance wait, and know thy office better.

Where

Where diſappointed Rage and Pride predominate, it will expreſs itſelf in the look and language of Tamerlane thus:

---- *Away, my ſoul*
Diſdains thy conference.

Theſe are the general marks and appearances of the Paſſions commonly introduced into our theatrical characters: many other modes and diſtinctions might have been pointed out; but thoſe not being ſo general, nor ſo frequent, will be beſt learned by ſtudying the circumſtances and objects which occaſion them.

It ſhould alſo be obſerved, that all theſe Paſſions are more or leſs diſtinguiſhable in the eye; Joy, Love, and Grief, are ſeen in an animated or cloudy look; ſometimes we ſee them in a lively and fierce agitation, expreſſive of Pride, Anger, and the like; again ſerenely glowing with Mildneſs and Benignity; overſpread with a gentle languor, they ſhow the ſoul diſſolved in Delight; Sorrow flows thro' them in tears; in a word, they wiſh, they promiſe, they threaten, and one ſingle glance

of this wonderful organ draws into light the moſt retired ſentiment of the ſoul.

Again, let it be obſerved, that, though all theſe paſſions, under different appearances, belong alike to tragic and comic characters; yet in Tragedy they are more ſtrongly and diſtinctly marked than in Comedy. The dignity of tragical characters requires more weight; yet as the many are not judges of this, capital errors are better concealed, as well as real beauties overlooked. The ſcenes of Comedy, being only copies from that ſort of life wherewith we are all acquainted, require the ſame variety of paſſions, but in different or inferior degrees; their exertion is never ſo ſtrong, nor do the occaſions require it: but their tranſitions are endleſs; and 'tis this variety which conſtitutes the excellency of the comic Player as well as Poet: therefore an error is much ſooner diſcovered here, though it is eaſier to be avoided. To give theſe various Paſſions and their tranſitions not only their proper force, but diſtinction, and to take an agreeable and cloſe likeneſs of thoſe light-flying touches of Nature, will be the ſtrongeſt and moſt ſtriking pictures an Actor can ex-

hibit in a comic way; and for that purpose, he must always keep Horace's rule in view,

* *Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo*
Doctum imitatorem & vivas hinc ducere voces.

What I understand by this distinction is, that the Player is not only to consult the proper bent of his own talents, but also carefully to mark the difference of the passions in every situation and circumstance; and that very seldom a Player can represent the same passion with equal truth and nature in Tragedy as in Comedy. The solemn majesty of the one cannot always be reconciled to, or exchanged at pleasure for the sprightly ease and freedom of the other. There is a spirited gaiety in most of our comic love-parts, and a wide difference between the love of Romeo and Manly, the jealousy of Othello and Mr. Strickland, one being heroic above the common level, the other familiar.

There is a property in our comic Drama, wherein we have the superiority over all our neighbours; and that is humour. The prin-

* Keep Nature's great original in view,
And thence the living images pursue. *Francis.*

ciples

ciples of liberty and freedom, which the excellency of our conſtitution has made natural to every man, have of courſe produced a greater variety and oddity of character than, I apprehend, any other nation can furniſh. And this quality is what all aim at, or poſſeſs in ſome ſhape or other; but it is no eaſy taſk to the Actor to diſtinguiſh and diverſify properly the witty, the ridiculous, or the humorous of every character.

When Love has a ſtrong daſh and tincture of folly in it, the ridicule riſes more forcibly on an audience: of this kind are the characters of Sir Paul Pliant and Fondlewife; the ridiculous diſtreſs of each, on the ſuſpicions of cuckoldom, are inexpreſſibly entertaining. Folly and ſimplicity of every other nature are no leſs pleaſing. The ſimple ſtupid ſtare, and vacancy of countenance in Maſter Stephen, or the ridiculous timidity of a Fribble, are as pictureſque as the ſprightly gaiety of a Sir Harry Wildair, or the more manly paſſion of a Valentine.

The propriety of the humour in characters of this kind is very much ſupported by mute action,

action, or bye-play, as ſome term it. In vain does the Poet write, if the Actor has not this art of ſetting his ſentiments in the faireſt point of view: To give no other inſtance, how different are our conceptions of that ſcene in the Anatomiſt, where the ſuppoſed dead body is brought in, when we read it, to what it appears when played; 'tis true we read what the Doctor ſpeaks, and can form an idea of the laying out his apparatus, but we loſe one half of the mirth of that humorous ſcene, unleſs we can ſee the ſilent terror of old Girard, under the apprehenſions of being immediately cut up, and lectured upon.

A few general obſervations from that great Maſter of action, elocution, and oratory, Quintilian, may illuſtrate the preceding obſervations.

"* The geſture (he obſerves) has more meaning than the voice itſelf; our very head, our very nod, is expreſſive of our ſentiments--- Brute beaſts, tho' void of motion, expreſs anger, joy and love in their eyes; and Painting,

* See Guthrie's Tranſlation of this author.

tho'

tho' motionless, affects sometimes more powerfully than words."

"The head is the principal object in action, and its natural position contributes very much to gracefulness. When it droops it gives an air of meanness, when upright of arrogance, lolling of negligence, stiff and motionless of rusticity and barbarity; it ought to conform its motions to the pronunciation, to agree with the gesture, and fall in with every action of the hand and body."

"The look ought to have the same direction as the gesture, except where we express abhorrence, dislike, and aversion; and then the eyes and hands have a counter-action."

"The eye-brows contracted express anger; cast down, sorrow; open, joy; they rise and fall to express assent or dissent."

"The eyelids and muscles of the cheeks may be subservient to the eyes, and the right management of the eye-brows is of great importance, because in some measure they form the look, and influence the whole forehead, by

by contracting, raising, or lowering it, and have very great force in action. The blood is put in motion by the sentiments of the mind, mantles over the bashful modest features, settles into a blush under dread or fear, disappears, vanishes and cools into paleness, and properly tempered produces a beautiful serenity."

"The neck ought not to be awry, but straight, though not stiff: it is ungraceful to extend or sink it too much. The former is attended with a painful squeaking weak pronunciation: when the chin sinks on the breast the voice is less distinct. The shoulders should be seldom shrugged or contracted; it gives the speaker a mean servile designing air, and is never done but in adulation, admiration, or fear.

To extend the arms in an easy posture with the hand open, as it is stretched forth, is extremely graceful, if the speech is to be flowing, or rapid; but if it is somewhat more gay, the whole person must be thrown out, and the freedom of the gesture rise with that of the stile.

All

All action wherein the hands are not concerned, is weak and limited; their expressions are as various as language; they speak of themselves, they demand, promise, call, threaten, implore, detest, fear, question, and deny. They express joy, sorrow, doubt, acknowledgment, repentance, moderation; they rouse up, prohibit and prove, admire and abash! All nations, all mankind understand their language.

The gesture ought to be more adapted to the sentiment than to the words; every part of an Orator ought to speak; and all the passions about us must languish and die, unless kept alive by the glow of his voice, look, and action." All which must be correspondsive with the passion he is then animated with. An injudicious play or distortion of the muscles, contrary to the passion or sentiment, is vague and despicable. It is the same as if the base or tenor of a concert should rush out into a Rhapsody of different Airs from the rest, and convert the whole entertainment to a confused chaos of sounds.---An Actor of this kind may always promise himself the contempt and ridicule of his audience, for departing from that just

juſt imitation of nature wherein the whole perfection of his art conſiſts.

It is apprehended that the foregoing obſervations will be of ſome uſe to Actors, in purſuing this branch to perfection. Doubtleſs their own ſtudy and experience will ſuggeſt many others. As this art is ſo extenſive, and admits of ſuch variety of improvement, it cannot be expected that a complete ſyſtem of rules ſhould be immediately advanced; and theſe are only intended to be an uſeful hint, and aſſiſtant to his genius, but not to fetter or confine it.

Every man has ſomething in his temper wherein he differs from others, to which his action will involuntarily accommodate itſelf; and every Actor will find, for that reaſon, ſome parts much eaſier to him than others. And as it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that all men can expreſs the ſame paſſions alike, yet, nature being the Actor's conſtant guide, he cannot err, if, as the great maſter of the drama directs, he takes care to "ſuit the Action to the Word, the Word to the Action."

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of Dreſs and its propriety.

THE laſt thing to be mentioned for the accompliſhment of an Actor, is a judicious propriety in his dreſs, and that it may be adapted with ſufficient exactitude to the age, time, and circumſtances of his character; this may be called the laſt colourings and finiſhings of his picture; and in this caſe, very much will depend on his knowledge of antient hiſtory and hiſtorical paintings; with the general cuſtoms and modes of dreſs which then prevailed; nor is he to be leſs knowing in thoſe which at preſent are the taſte and practice of modern nations in general, and of his own in particular. By this means he may introduce ſome ſtriking particularity, which will very much improve and enliven his action, and greatly aſſiſt him in giving his illuſive repreſentation the ſtronger reſemblance of reality. Nor can he find a better guide in this particular, than the dreſſes of all nations, deſcribed and drawn to the life in a quarto book, publiſhed by Jeffries, at the corner of St. Martin's lane, in the Strand.

The

The Romans were ſo nicely careful in this point, that, as Mr. Kennet informs us, their Actors were always habited according to the faſhion of the country where their ſcene was laid. This was ſtrictly right; but notwithſtanding, I don't know whether an attempt to introduce ſuch a practice on our Theatre, would be ſo well received by audiences who have been ſo long habituated to ſuch glaring impropriety and negligence in the oppoſite extreme.

But this we may however aſſert, that if a greater attention was beſtowed on this ſubject, and the noted perſonages were dreſſed according to nature, and what we learn of them from their hiſtories or pictures yet exiſting, it would let us much more readily into the truth of the ſtory, and greatly beautify the repreſentation. This ſhould be obſerved with great attention in all hiſtorical plays; but, where the characters are more general, ſuch as Fine Gentlemen, Fops, Beaux, Prudes, &c. (theſe, being the growth of all ages and nations, are to be dreſſed according to our preſent ideas of thoſe characters, and to the appearances they make in common life, becauſe their manners

 are

are nearly the ſame, though their dreſſes may differ. And as they are more general, it would be abſurd to introduce them to us in the faſhionable dreſs of the Poet's days, which according to the fluctuation of faſhions, we may ſuppoſe, is either unknown or generally diſuſed: For example, what ſhould we think of a Lord Foppington now dreſſed with a large full-bottomed wig, laced cravat, buttons as large as apples, or a Millimant with a head-dreſs four ſtories high?

Sir Godfrey Kneller and other celebrated Painters were ſo ſenſible of this continual change of dreſs, that they drew their Ladies uſually in their hair, and in a faſhion of their own creating, which they were certain would be always new and graceful.

Mr. Cibber tells us, that, "Dogget in dreſſing a character to the greateſt exactneſs, was remarkably ſkilful; the leaſt article of whatever habit he wore, ſeemed in ſome degree to ſpeak and mark the different humour he repreſented; a neceſſary care in a Comedian, in which many have been too remiſs or ignorant." I've heard this confirmed

 from

from one that performed with Dogget; and that he could with the greateſt exactneſs paint his face ſo as to repreſent the ages of ſeventy, eighty, and ninety diſtinctly, which occaſioned Sir Godfrey Kneller to tell him one day at Button's Coffee-houſe, that, "he excelled him in Painting; for, that he could only copy nature from the originals before him, but he (Dogget) could vary them at pleaſure, and yet keep a cloſe likeneſs." In the character of Money-trap, in the Confederacy, he wore an old thread-bare black coat, to which he had put new cuffs, pocket-lids, and buttons, on purpoſe to make its ruſtineſs more conſpicuous. The neck was ſtuffed ſo as to make him appear round ſhouldered, and gave his head the greater prominency; his ſquare-toed ſhoes were large enough to buckle over thoſe he wore in common, which made his legs appear much ſmaller than uſual.

Thus, the moſt trifling circumſtance in dreſs judiciouſly introduced will heighten a character, and have a very good effect. I doubt whether the enormity of the Mock-Doctor's wig does not add greatly in vulgar eyes to the humour of the character; I re-

member a performer in the Miſer, who in his rage for the loſs of his money tore open his waiſtcoat, and diſcovered an old patched flannel one under it; which ſingle circumſtance (though trifling in itſelf) not only greatly illuſtrated the character, but very much heightened the diverſion of his audience. Hence it will follow, that the judgment and care of an Actor, in thus adapting his dreſs to his character, will add greatly to his ſucceſs and reputation. I have often obſerved that the Foppingtons, when dreſſed with uncommon elegance, have greatly prepoſſeſſed the audience, though perhaps the Actor did not utter a ſingle ſentence afterwards to ſupport that prepoſſeſſion.

The dignity of tragic characters allows that the ſtile and dreſs ſhould be proportionably ſo; and theſe being fewer in kind are not ſo frequently varied; but thoſe of Comedy includes a greater variety of characters which come nearer to our conceptions. The variety of dreſs both in high and low life muſt be attended to in the Drama, otherwiſe the propriety cannot be ſupported.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The errors and improprieties which an Actor is to avoid.

THUS far I have attempted to deſcribe the ſeveral requiſites for forming the complete Actor, viz. genius, education, ſtudy of nature and its paſſions, elocution, action, and dreſs: it will not now be improper to point out to him a few of the improprieties and imperfections which Actors in general of every claſs are apt to run into; and this ſhall be done as nearly as poſſible in the ſame order.

1. Where vanity has the aſcendant we are apt to over-rate our abilities, and a fine perſon, a lively turn, and great volubility of ſpeech, and ſuch tranſient accompliſhments, are thought ſufficient qualifications for the Stage, while genius and intellectual endowments are ſeldom thought of or regarded. Some have I found ſo deſtitute of the common knowledge of pronunciation and accent, that they have been obliged to apply to a maſter for inſtruction, even in this firſt branch

of their art. Nay, ſo far have I ſeen this abſurdity carried, that when one of this kind of Actors has by dint of ſevere application acquired a ſort of mechanical ability of pronunciation and action, yet ſo indifferent was his judgment, that when put to read another part, wherein he had not been previouſly inſtructed, he underſtood as little of it as a perſon who only ſings by ear does of the theory of muſic.

On the other hand, I have known an Actor who has had a very liberal education, and who had acquired a knowledge of his art, yet to whom nature was ſo unkind that his powers did not reach beyond common declamation; and ſo deficient was he in voice and action, that at beſt he could be compared only to a muſician, who had a critical judgment in that ſcience, but could neither play or ſing.

2. "There are ſome perſons," as Lord Shaftsbury obſerves, "ſo happily formed by nature, that with the greateſt ſimplicity or rudeneſs of education have ſtill ſomething of a natural grace and comelineſs in their action; and again, that others of better education, by a wrong aim and injudicious affectation of

grace,

grace, are of all people the fartheſt removed from it." By this rule it will be eaſy to diſtinguiſh between the Actor of natural and acquired abilities; there is a grace to be found in the one, which ever makes his performance more original and cloſer to nature, whereof the other is at beſt but a painful and timid copy, like "the ſtudied airs of a dancing-maſter, compared to the graceful eaſe and freedom of the fine gentleman."

Performers of this claſs may be compared to manneriſts in Painting, who when once they have acquired a certain habitude of colouring, never depart from it, nor ſurprize us with the novelties of grace and beauty, which are the genuine offpring of genius; like ſtatues they are always invariably the ſame, and whenever the ſhining period comes on, previouſly feel for an attitude with as much ſollicitude as a dexterous marksman looks out for a lucky ſtand to take aim from. This muſt be evermore diſguſting; the ſame ſtrain of muſick perpetually played over, without any new improvements, muſt diminiſh in reliſh, and at length cloy inſtead of delight; whereas a muſician who excels in his art, will throw into every piece, as

often as he performs it, ſuch additional unſtudied graces as will always give the harmony the air of novelty, and improved delight.

3. This mechanical ſtiffneſs may be imputed ſometimes to Actors copying from one another rather than from nature; and for want of the ſame ſkill which their models poſſeſs, their performance is as offenſive as it is unaffecting.---I know a performer of reputation on the Stage, who in holding up his hand, ſtanding ſtill, &c. always to a ſecond of time, obſerves the ſame movements. One would think that his part, according to the practice of the antients, was ſet to muſic; not unlike this are the regulated movements of the renowned figures attendant on St. Dunſtan's clock, where as ſoon as the hand points to the hour, up goes the club to tell it to every body.

But let it be obſerved, that in thus diſtinguiſhing the Actor of genius from the mechanical performer, I would not be underſtood to ſay that a Player to ſhew his genius muſt be perpetually varying his attitudes; I know there are ſome noted ones which we may ſuppoſe have obtained all the perfection they are capable

capable of, or at leaſt that cuſtom has ſo far authenticated them as not now to be conveniently departed from. Of this kind is that of Hamlet at the appearance of the ghoſt, and of Romeo in the Tomb-ſcene, &c.

When Actors are unacquainted with the juſt ſtandard of nature, or want ſufficient powers to reach it, they dwindle into effeminacy and contempt. How aukwardly does the fire of a Bajazet ſuit the ſpirit of a Fribble; ſuch puny gentlemen, inſtead of tearing a paſſion to rags, let it freeze on their lips: A contrary impropriety have I obſerved in ſome of the women's characters, ſuch as Zara, Hermione, Alicia, &c. which, though they require great fire and ſpirit, yet the Poet never deſigned that it ſhould go beyond the bounds of nature and female delicacy. The ſoftneſs and elegancy of the ſex ornaments every little action: every deviation therefrom into termagant rant and violence, is ſo far ungraceful as it approaches to or partakes of the action and manner which is natural to the oppoſite ſex. I know an actreſs of this kind, and of ſome reputation too, in Hermione, whoſe action was ſo violent and indelicate, that ſhe ſeemed rather

rather a man in women's cloaths that was going to fight Oreſtes, than an enraged diſappointed princeſs.

It is very common for young performers, the Ladies in particular, in ſcenes which require the greateſt exertion of the natural powers, and in the very warmth and pathos of a ſentiment, to beſtow frequent ſide-glances on the audience, demanding their applauſe, more for their beauty of perſon or elegance of dreſs, than for their juſt acting. This vanity has diverted their attention from every idea of merit but what was centered in their own perſons; and ſo they appeared of conſequence to their private admirers, the judgment of the Public is with them of ſmall eſtimation.

A middling articulate voice is preferable to a bellowing loud one, which, though noiſy, is not diſtinct; and is as painful to the performer as it is to the audience; what Cicero ſays of the Orators of his time, may be juſtly applied to performers of this denomination, who placed all their merit in the ſtrength of their lungs, "that it was want of ability to ſpeak

ſpeak made them bawl, as lame men who cannot walk, are forced to get on horſeback *." Theſe unnatural ſwells of the voice, are like the protuberances of Bacchus compared to the proportions of a man of health and ſymmetry.

No leſs carefully to be avoided, is that perpetual monotony or ſameneſs of tone, which ſome of our performers, even of judgment, fall into; the ear naturally delights in variety, and ſhould as much as poſſible be gratified with it; the ſame repetition and cadence of the voice, like the ſame tune, tires the ear, and amounts at beſt to a cold recital, which, though it might be ſtrictly correct, yet wants that variety and expreſſiveneſs which nature alway aſſumes when ſhe is in earneſt.

An Actor is not to ſuppoſe, that when his ſpeech is over his buſineſs is ſo too, and that he is only to remain a mere expletive on the Stage; he ſhould carefully attend to what is done by others, and be affected accordingly, for there is as great an excellence in knowing how to behave while others are ſpeaking, as when he ſpeaks himſelf; the ſpirit of the ſcene

* See Plutarch's life of Cicero.

and

and dignity of the character is as much ſupported by ſilent action as by words. I have ſeen ſome performers in Tragedy, in the very extaſy of rant and madneſs; but when their ſpeech expired, ſo did their paſſion, action, and motion. And, till the next paroxyſm of rage returned, as Lopez in the Miſtake ſays, "they look'd calmly all around."

Some Actors think themſelves ſufficiently deſerving in their way, if they are abſolutely perfect in their parts, not conſidering that this, though eſſentially neceſſary, is yet the ſmalleſt part of their merit, and which every ſchool-boy can rival them in; others again, who, though they were perfectly knowing in their own parts, yet on enquiry have appeared altogether unacquainted with the plot and every other character but their own; how then can they keep up that connection which every ſcene requires, and appear to be as properly affected with what others are doing as with what they do themſelves?

I have remarked ſeveral of our performers to be very languid and unfeeling in the firſt or ſecond act of ſome Plays that required ſtrength

ſtrength and execution, (ſuch as Oreſtes and Zanga), that they might reſerve all their fire and force for the laſt ſcene. And thus the Poet loſes one half of his merit, by the diffidence of the Player, who fears to exhauſt himſelf too ſoon.

And it is common for Actors who have acquired ſome ſmall reputation by ſome favourite ſpeech or attitude, where they have happened by a deſperate chance to be in the right, to introduce on every other occaſion, be it ever ſo different or foreign, that ſame mode of expreſſion or attitude, which at firſt acquired the tranſient approbation of the audience. This is a demonſtrable proof of their ignorance and vanity.

The propriety of a character is often loſt by the ſhowineſs of the dreſs. This piece of French vanity obtains but too much on our Stage. I have ſeen Cato and Brutus more grandly dreſſed than Anthony and Juba, though their philoſophical turn was quite foreign to ſo poor a pride; and if at all proper, it could be only ſo in the young prince and general. It is uſual to dreſs theſe characters in

in large full-bottom'd or tye wigs; which is both contrary to hiſtory and the known character of each, and as great an impropriety as for a Lord Foppington to wear one of their ſhapes. Mr. Hogarth has very juſtly ridiculed abſurdities of this kind, by putting a bag-wig on the buſt of Scipio *. Waiting-maids too are often dreſſed as fine as their miſtreſſes; and Lord Townly, who, though an elegant is a grave character, is often dreſſed not unlike a Foppington; this certainly was never intended by the author, and when it was firſt played, the dreſs was genteel but not glaring.

To ſee Richard, Henry VIII. Falſtaff, &c. dreſſed in the habits of the times they lived in, and the others in modern ones, quite oppoſite, is an inconſiſtency which carries its own conviction with it. What ſhould we think if Le Brun had dreſſed Alexander's ſoldiers in modern regimentals, and yet preſerved the dreſs of their ancient commanders. Othello too in modern cloaths is a miſtake of the ſame nature, and yet Zanga and Oroonoko ſtill appear in their national habits. Mr. Garrick was ſenſible of this impropriety, and when he

* Second Plate of Marriage à la mode.

performed

performed this character, added the propriety of the dreſs to his excellent performance.

I think it was Mr. Macklin who firſt dreſſed Iago properly; formerly he was dreſſed in ſuch a manner, as to be known at firſt ſight; but it is unnatural to ſuppoſe, that an artful villain, like him, would chuſe a dreſs which would ſtigmatize him to every one: I think, as Caſſio and he belong to one regiment, they ſhould both retain the ſame regimentals.

The truth of the repreſentation is often loſt, in not ſuiting the character to the age of the Actor: Captain Flaſh is an empty military fop; yet I have ſeen an Actor of threeſcore, and of twice the bulk of ſuch junior homebred heroes, ſtrut and look terrible, with all the affected vivacity of twenty-two; to heighten the abſurdity, he was dreſſed in an old ſcarlet coat, buff belt, baſket-hilted ſword, with a black major wig and ſtock, not much unlike one of our modern prize-fighters, or Charles the XIIth, the wig only excepted.

Time and circumſtance in ſome of our theatrical characters, is very often overlooked, or miſtaken:

miſtaken: Thus Clodio comes in full dreſſed, though he's ſuppoſed to be juſt returned from his travels, and his firſt ſpeech is to bid the grooms take care of his horſes. On the firſt performance of the Recruiting Officer, Mr. Farquhar thought Mr. Keene who performed Juſtice Ballance had neglected the conſiſtency of the character in preſerving the ſame dreſs throughout; though in the ſecond act, Ballance receives an account of the death of his ſon, and ſays to Worthy, "the decorum of mourning is what we owe the world, &c." and that the author's intention was, that Ballance ſhould appear in mourning through the remainder of the Play; but Mr. Wilkes told him, "that the neglect of ſuch a propriety was very excuſable, as the ſolemnity of the dreſs would have leſſened the humour of the character." Whether the Poet or Player was in the right, I ſhall not detetmine. Many other miſtakes might be mentioned; I ſhall name but a few more. I have ſeen an Actor who performed Romeo, who, to heighten the character and feed his vanity, ſpoke the celebrated ſpeech of Mercutio,

O then I ſee Queen Mab, &c.

In

in the ſame ſolemn declamatory manner as a lawyer pleads a cauſe. Is it not abſurd to ſee Hamlet juſt come from on board a ſhip, where he had been robbed and plundered, with a well-powdered wig, and every way as nicely dreſſed as at court, and even face the court in the church-yard, without any alteration of garb, when it is plain he is not known till he diſcovers himſelf, by crying out, "I am Hamlet the Dane."

There is a variety of characters in our Theatre, which I don't think are ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed in the performance. There is too much ſameneſs in the old men, though I don't know of any two that are drawn exactly ſo; nor can we find ſuch an appearance in real life: For example, Don Lewis is teſty, yet has a ſmall daſh of humour; Sir Tunbelly, merry and benevolent; Smuggler, a hypocritical debauchee; and Lovegold, a compound of every thing that is ſordid and mean-ſpirited. Sometimes too I have obſerved theſe old gentlemen loſe their character before the end of the performance, and return to all the agility and ſprightlineſs of youth, preſerving nothing about them of antiquity but their names and

dreſs. Again, there is a remarkable diſtinction obſervable in moſt of our theatrical fops, which we have before obſerved, is not ſufficiently attended to on the Stage. As the Poets have drawn them, they are all more or leſs copies from life. Sir Courtly Nice is ſqueamiſh, affected, and formal. Lord Foppington, in the Relapſe, a pert coxcomb, elated with a large fortune, and proud of his perſon; but the moſt elegant and high-bred fop in all our modern Comedies, is the Lord Foppington, in the Careleſs Huſband; Clodio is a pert frenchified coxcomb; and Beau Clincher is moſt judiciouſly drawn by the author as a contraſt to the real fine gentleman, Sir Harry Wildair; being the mimic of a fop, without knowing what a fop is.

This laſt character I take to be the moſt difficult of any to perſonate in a comic way: it includes rather more of genteel life than our Players have an opportunity of being acquainted with; or if they have the opportunity, yet they want the talents: for the fine gentleman is certainly hard to hit off; but the fops and coxcombs having always ſome diſtinguiſhing marks and peculiarities, are known at

firſt

firſt ſight, and eaſily imitated; and, thanks to the preſent age, there are plenty of theſe characters every where to draw from.

It is an extreme arrogance which ſome take of altering and deviating from their author, by introducing ſome out-of-the-way words and grimaces, which were never dreamed of nor intended by him; ſo that, as the Tatler obſerves, "it is impoſſible to ſee the Poet for the Player." This is but a poor attempt to gain a falſe applauſe; and is a diſhonour not only to the Poet, but an affront to the judicious part of his audience. I know but a very few, who are able to take in the whole meaning of the Poet, much leſs to amend or ſurpaſs him; and I hope this impertinence of ſaying more than is ſet down for them, will always meet with the contempt it deſerves. Bayes is indeed a character with which this liberty may be taken, without infringing the laws of propriety.

As we are upon the ſubject of propriety and impropriety, it may not prove perhaps unentertaining to relate an odd innovation that I ſaw made by a company of Strolers at Worceſter,

to heighten Jane Shore's diſtreſs in the fifth act. They took a hint from the old ballad ſtory; and when ſhe was leaving Alicia's door in that deep diſtreſs, introduced a baker trundling a penny loaf after her. The officers and guard who are ſuppoſed to attend her, immediately ſeized him, and led him to execution for his untimely compaſſion; before he went off, he broke out into the following lines from the Fair Penitent,

That I muſt die, it is my only comfort:
Death is the privilege of human nature,
And life without it were not worth our taking;
Thither the poor, the priſoner, and the mourner,
Fly for relief, and lay their burthens down.
Come then and take me now to thy cold arms,
Thou meager ſhade.

ROWE.

We may gueſs at the judgment and taſte of the audience by their being more affected and edified with this improvement, than with the moſt diſtreſsful ſcenes of the Play.

It is poſſible for the beſt performances to become ſometimes the objects of ridicule: Virgil has been traveſtied by Cotton; Mr. Gay, in his

his Farce of the What d'ye call it, has burlesqued some excellent speeches in Shakespear, Otway, Rowe, &c. so has Mr. Fielding in his Farce of Tom Thumb. If such burlesque happens to be executed with spirit and humour, it may be indulged for once or twice, for novelty sake, oftner it would grow tiresome, and a judicious mind would soon look out for higher entertainment. The summer after Cato was first performed, some of the most eminent Comedians thought its successful run would authorize a burlesque, and accordingly they employed one of the would-be-wits for that purpose. This they performed in a town near London; Norris was Cato, and Penkethman Juba: a few lines of the first speech will be a sufficient specimen of the whole.

PORTIUS.

It is indeed a damn'd dark cloudy morning,
Yon ass's bray portends approaching rain;
The clouds, big-bellied, teem with drizly showers,
To wail the fate of Rome, our mother city,
And Cato's too, her old dejected dad.

But notwithstanding its humour, it was deservedly damned the second night, and notice

given to the Players, that their houſe ſhould be ſhut up, if they attempted a repetition of this buffoonery; in which I own I can't ſee much harm, and we know that the beſt Plays that ever were exhibited at Paris, have been parodied; nor does the laugh excited by the burleſque leſſen the opinion which the people have of Corneille, Racine, Crebillion, or Voltaire.

If an Actor at any time attempts to give his character any occaſional touches, or higher finiſhings, that liberty muſt notwithſtanding be taken with the utmoſt diffidence and caution; for, as in painting, though a juſt likeneſs may be taken, yet by labouring it too much, it may be inſenſibly loſt, and the features exaggerated into deformity; ſo in acting, many ſtriving to ſurpaſs their contemporaries, and wanting ſufficient judgment where to fix the bounds of perfection, have run into the moſt extravagant abſurdities; and, as Apelles ſaid of Protogenes, often ſpoil the fine things they do, for want of knowing when to leave off. I ſhall here take notice of one inſtance of this overdoing, which I take to be as ſtrong a mark of want of judgment as underdoing, because

cauſe I myſelf was a witneſs of it. A young gentleman of genteel figure, who had a univerſity education, was ſo judicious a critic in theatrical affairs, that he was reckoned the terror of the Players; and his opinion was ſuppoſed important enough to determine that of the town. At the repeated requeſt of his acquaintances he condeſcended to perform the part of Hamlet, and the exhibition brought the greateſt audience that had been remembered for many years: they expected to have ſeen ſomething ſingularly juſt; but if in this hope they were diſappointed, they were comforted with finding him ſingularly uncommon; this was the principle upon which he ſet out, and he ſtrictly adhered to it, for by taking pains to differ from the manner of every other performer, he converted the whole into the moſt contemptible ridicule. In the firſt act, when the ghoſt appeared he fell on his knees, and wept; when it beckoned him away, he followed penſively with his arms acroſs; in the ſecond, where he comes in reading, he was bareheaded, with the neck of his ſhirt, and his waiſtcoat unbuttoned. I ſuppoſe he had that line in view which Ophelia ſays to her father in the ſecond act:

With his doublet all unbrac'd.

In the laſt act he came in with Horatio to the grave-diggers, dreſſed in a ſcarlet coat, with ſword and boots, the better to diſguiſe himſelf; and notwithſtanding his grief, and in the midſt of his moral reflections, he laughed heartily at the grave-diggers jeſts. In the laſt ſcene he was not ſatisfied with killing the king, but (Drawcanſir-like) he killed moſt of his attendants, &c. &c. This was his extraordinary performance of the character; his friends were greatly diſappointed, but the audience in general diverted by the unexpected burleſque. Had he confined himſelf to the common methods, I am certain he would have performed it to ſatisfaction; but in ſtriving to go beyond any thing he had ever ſeen, he degraded the performance extremely.

The laſt impropriety I ſhall mention is that ſhameful negligence of ſome Actors in coming on the Stage imperfect in their parts, and applying to the prompter for aſſiſtance; this takes off from the reality, and converts a lively ſcene into a cold unaffecting recital.

Excuſe

Excuſe me, reader, if I here introduce an obſervation upon a failing of the like kind, which has crept into the pulpit, and is peculiar to our own Nation; namely, that of reading ſermons. It is a pity that the ſublimeſt truths, clothed in the moſt exalted language, ſhould not alſo be accompanied with all the graces of oratory. Were theſe happily introduced and applied, that drowſy attention ſo often paid to the preacher's moſt elaborate efforts would vaniſh, and his auditors would be at once delighted and improved. What is it ſo much contributes to the ſucceſs of the Methodiſts in this particular, but their deviation from this common beaten track, and delivering their diſcourſes with that ſeeming earneſtneſs which muſt be always ſtriking and emphatic. I am ſorry to ſay that the pulpit and bar in general have laid aſide the uſe of graceful action, which is one of the greateſt ornaments of oratory, and ought never to be ſeparated from an elegant pronunciation, the remains whereof ſeem now to be retired or rather confined to the Senate and Stage; and even there they are but rarely diſplayed.

I have

I have now pointed out a few of the errors and miſtakes which the Actor is to ſhun, as well as the excellencies he is to purſue, all which I hope will be of caution and uſe to him. I ſhall now take my leave of him, only with a few ſhort remarks.

It is his buſineſs in all caſes to obſerve nature and propriety; it is obſervable that in all capital paintings, there are a few principal figures which more remarkably ſtrike the eye, and by that means throw the attendant ones into their proper diſtance; in like manner, on the Stage, the leading figures or perſonages in a ſcene, ſhould, by their dignity of action, throw the attending characters into their proper ſhade of inferiority; and, then the whole, like a fine painting in perſpective, will be all graceful and harmonious.

Laſtly, Nature in this, as in all other arts, muſt be his parent and inſtructreſs: every deviation from her precepts is ſo far a falling ſhort of perfection; if he follows the natural bent of his genius, and does not aſſume parts beyond his ſtrength; if he is ſtrict in marking every paſſion and ſentiment by his action

and

and elocution, and takes in all the assistance and improvement which art and learning recommend, he may assure himself of certain success in this difficult but pleasing art.

First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same.
Unerring Nature still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.

POPE.

PART

PART III.

A Short HISTORICAL ACCOUNT of the STAGE Antient and Modern, to the Reſtoration.

CHAP. I.

Of the firſt riſe of the Drama, and the ſtructure of the Roman Theatre.

THE Stage, like moſt other Arts and Sciences, had very rude beginnings; time, concurring with various cauſes, has brought it to the perfection it now ſtands in. It was cuſtomary with the ancients, when they aſſembled together in their harveſt or vintage, to celebrate that ſeaſon of feſtivity with hymns in honour of the Gods and Heroes, and

and then to unbend their minds from their rural fatigues with jocose songs full of satyric raillery against each other. These were divided into choruſſes, accompanied with dances and inſtruments, with certain recitations at intervals. The perſons who made thoſe recitations were from thenceforth called Actors. Theſpis firſt introduced one perſon on the Stage for that purpoſe, whom Æſchylus finding inſufficient, he added a ſecond, to entertain the audience more agreeably in a kind of dialogue. Their manner of repreſentation was as ſimple and artleſs as their ſubjects were unpoliſhed and innocent: their Stage, if it may be ſo called, was only a ſmall eminence ſodded over, not unlike our modern cockpits; they were ſhaded at top by the branches of the neighbouring trees neatly interwoven; the ſpaces between the trees were filled up with boards covered with the ſkins of beaſts, and ſometimes with boughs newly cut down. Juvenal deſcribes it thus:

- - - - - - ipſa dierum
Feſtorum herboſa colitur ſi quando theatro
Majeſtas; tandemque redit ad pulpita notum
Exodium - - - - - -

On

On Theatres of turf in homely ſtate,
Old Plays they act, old feaſts they celebrate;
The ſame rude ſong returns upon the crowd,
And by tradition is for wit allow'd.

DRYDEN.

Theſpis, already mentioned, was the firſt who attempted any alteration or improvement of theſe antient entertainments; he travelled up and down with his Actors and implements in a cart; and for want of better concealment, or for what other reaſon is not material, their faces were daubed with lees of wines*; ſuch was either the modeſty of the times or the imperfections of the Actors; but Æſchylus, his ſucceſſor in the Drama, from thoſe rude hints firſt ſupplied his Actors with decent maſks, inſtead of their former varniſh, and perſuaded the Athenians to build a public Theatre, conſtructed entirely of wood, perhaps not unlike our modern booths; but this happening to fall by the prodigious weight of the audience, many of whom were killed, it was afterwards rebuilt at the public charge, of ſtone, and capable of holding upwards of twenty thouſand ſpectators.

* Perunctí fœcibus ora. VIRG.

The

The Romans, about one hundred and twenty years afterwards, took the firſt hint of their Drama from the Greeks: their Theatre differed from the Grecian only in ſome particular dimenſions and the uſes to which ſome parts of the building were appropriated. According to the beſt accounts we can collect, that part which was allotted to the ſpectators, was of a ſemicircular form, capable of containing near thirty thouſand perſons; the other, intended for the Actors and Scenery, ended in an oblong; the whole was divided into five parts, viz.

1. The Porticus, Scalæ, or Sedilia, which were ſeats diſpoſed all round the Theatre, one above the other, where the common people were placed; and it was therefore ſometimes called Popularia.

2. The Orcheſtra, where the ſenators, dancers, and muſic were ſeated. Hither alſo the knights and gentlemen reſorted; and theſe ſeats were for that reaſon ſometimes called Æqueſtria.---The intermediate ſpace between this and the Sedilia was called Cavea, not unlike our modern Pit. The Orcheſtra of the Greeks differed from that of the Romans

in this, that in it were placed artificial vaſes of different tones, againſt which the Actor's voice reverberating, acquired a more energic and harmonious ſound.

3. The Proſcenium, a place drawn from one ſide of the Theatre to the other, between the Orcheſtra and the Scene; it was higher than the Orcheſtra, and lower than the Scene: here the Actors performed. The ſpace alſo behind the ſcene was called Proſcenium, where the Actors retired, and the wardrobe was kept.

4. The Scene was fixed on a triangular machine, and contrived to turn on an axle or pin, ſo as to face the audience. It repreſented on one ſide, 1. a grand city; 2. a magnificent palace, or portico; 3. a wild foreſt, cave, or meadow.

When a Comedy was to be played, the firſt of theſe was turned towards the Audience; if a Tragedy, the ſecond; and for a ſatyrical piece the third.

The underpart of the Stage was for riſings, ſinkings, &c. and moſtly anſwered the ſame uſes as ours.

The Roman Theatre was at firſt only compoſed of wood. Pompey firſt erected a fixed one among them, which was a noble edifice of ſquare ſtones; but that of M. Scaurus, mentioned by Pliny, was the moſt magnificent that antiquity boaſts of. The Scenes, or Stage, were divided into three rows of pillars, one above another, the back was of marble, and the others of glaſs, or chryſtal; the whole interſperſed with three thouſand ſtatues: the richeſt ſtuffs, tapeſtries, and paintings, were employed in its decorations, though it was not intended to ſtand above a month. There was another building erected afterwards by Curio, a Roman knight, inferior in magnificence to the former, where the Players performed in the firſt part of the day. To this another was added, and contrived by the help of ſprings and hinges to turn round without ſhifting the Scenery; which then formed one ſpacious amphitheatre, where the people were entertained with the fights of gladiators, and wild beaſts, when the theatric diverſions were over.

We may judge of the grandeur of the antient Theatres, by the magnificent taſte for building which the Romans and Greeks poſſeſ-

ſed,

ſed, and by the remains of antient architecture yet extant.---For a more particular and exact deſcription of them, Vitruvius, Montfaucon, Rollin, and Kennet, may be conſulted.

CHAP. II.

Of the antient Maſks.

THE Maſks are of very antient invention, but were not uſed theatrically till the time of Æſchylus. They are ſaid to have been firſt made of the bark of trees, (*Oraque Corticibus ſumunt horrenda cavatis.* Virg.) of leather, covered with ſtuff or linnen, but thoſe being found eaſily to wear out, they made others of wood, which the Sculptor faſhioned to the Poet's fancy. They were alſo ſometimes compoſed of a leaf called Arcion; which Pliny tells us was the broadeſt leaf that could be found: *Quidam Arcion perſonatam vocant cujus folio nullum eſt latius.* The antient Maſks ſerved only ſimply to cover the face, but thoſe of the Theatre were a kind of helmets which covered the whole head, and repreſented not only the ſeveral features, but alſo the hair, beard, and ears, according to the ſeveral characters, and

even extended to the ornaments which women uſed in their head-dreſſes. The different age, ſex, character, and paſſions, were ſo ſtrongly depicted on them, that the ſpectators apprehended at firſt ſight for whom they were intended, and required no other explanation: ſo ſtrongly were the antients of opinion, that a particular caſt of countenance was eſſential to every character and paſſion, that, whenever a Play was delivered to the Actors, the authors alſo gave a draught of the Maſques proper for it. One, a complete draught of theſe, is yet to be ſeen in an antient copy of Terence, in the Vatican; and there are alſo ſketches of them in M. Dacier's Terence.

There were tragic, comic, and ſatyric Maſks, all which had exaggerated features, a wide gaping mouth, and ſeemed, according to Lucian, ready to devour the ſpectators. A fourth ſort has been alſo found, the features of which were very regular, and the deformity of the others did not enter into their compoſition; theſe probably belonged to the Dancers.

We have reaſon to apprehend there were three other kinds in uſe with the antients, though

though they have neglected to mention them, viz. 1. Those which represented men naturally as they are. 2. Those which were for shades and ghosts, and had something frightful in their appearances. 3. Such as characterised furies, gorgons, &c. these were the most terrible of all. Pausanias tells us, Eschylus was the first who introduced the hideous and frightful Mask, and that Euripides made use of some with serpents on their heads. Lastly, the satyric Masks, which were the most ridiculous and extravagant of all, and founded only on the imagination of the Poets; for, besides the fauns and satyrs (from whence they had their name) they had those also of Cyclops, Centaurs, and all the monstrous animals which Fable has created, and here it was they were most necessary.

These Masks, it must be allowed, were of the greatest advantage to the antient Actors, as thereby they could play a variety of characters without any inconvenience from age or sex, and saved the spectators the tiresomeness of seeing always the same faces; they could also by this method multiply their Actors at pleasure, as every piece had its peculiar

liar caſt of countenance, and beſides could make the appearance of thoſe pieces more perfect whoſe intrigue depended on a reſemblance of perſons, ſuch as Amphytrion and the Menechmæ; whereas with us, thoſe characters can never acquire a ſufficient probability, and imagination muſt be called in to ſupply the defect.

It is not improbable that as the antients were ſo ſkilled in Painting and Sculpture, the utmoſt care was taken to make the Maſk conformable to the Poet's idea: thus Hercules, Ajax, Ulyſſes, &c. were furniſhed with Maſks denotive of their ſeveral characters of ſtrength, courage, fortitude, and ſagacity. Niobe, Electra, &c. appeared weeping; and the Masks of comic characters were of a pleaſant caſt. If there was a variety of paſſions included in the ſame character, the Actor had either different Maſks or a different paſſion painted on each ſide; and according to the paſſion wherewith he was ſuppoſed to be influenced, he ſhewed the correſponding profile to the ſpectators.

As the antient Theatres were of far greater extent than ours, thoſe Maſks were probably coloured

coloured much ſtronger than the life, that they might have their proper effect at a diſtance; they were likewiſe hollow and lined with braſs, or ſome other ſonorous ſubſtance, which greatly aſſiſted the voice, gave it a deeper tone, and carried it to a greater diſtance. This is one principal reaſon why they admitted the uſe of Maſks; for as ſome of the ſpectators were upwards of one hundred yards diſtant from the Stage, they could not diſcern the variable Play of the ſofter paſſions in the countenance; and for the ſame reaſon the natural voice would have died away, and been loſt before it reached the ear.

Theſe Maſks were further neceſſary to them, becauſe as they were not only very careful in diſtinguiſhing particular characters, but even ſometimes copied exact likeneſſes, they alſo gave the ſame air of majeſty, fury, and terror to their Heroes and Demi-gods which they ſuppoſed them to poſſeſs when living. This gave their repreſentations the ſtrongeſt appearances of truth and reality, as they were in all reſpects conformable to the commonly received opinions of the times.

The principal inconvenience of the antient Masks was their want of motion to express the transitions of the passions; but the structure of their Theatre, and the great distance of the Stage, even from the nearest part of the Audience, as has been observed before, would have deprived the Actor of all merit in the exhibition, had he appeared in his own countenance.

Notwithstanding all the perfection which they had attained in this art, it is obvious, that the use of Masks made every thing much easier to them than to us. The passion being ready drawn, there was no need of straining the features to their semblance; and they had nothing more to do than to study and imitate propriety of voice and action; the same person might at different times represent a youth, an aged man, a young damsel, &c. and all without any apparent impropriety: but with us it is quite otherwise. The different appearances and dress of each passion, as they are expressed by the countenance, voice, and gesture, must be closely studied, and every help introduced, which will vary the representation as much as possible. According to this mode of

of acting, to recite judiciouſly and melodiouſly was an Actor's greateſt merit; whereas with us, theſe are but aſſiſtant perfections, and a man can never hope to excel, that has not a marking countenance, ſtrong feeling, and the power of altering his features ſo as to expreſs his feelings.

I think it a pity, however, that the Maſks ſhould be totally laid aſide; they would be of admirable ſervice, even at this day, to many of our Players who aſſume parts to which their abilities are not at all adapted: thus might that vacancy of countenance, that total abſence of ſentiment which they ſometimes diſplay in parts that require the utmoſt energy of paſſion, be happily concealed.

The Maſk, Sock, and Buſkin, conſtituted the moſt material differences between the antient and modern Players. The Sock and Buſkin were the antient appendages of Tragedy and Comedy; the former is deſcribed by ſome to be a kind of a high ſhoe reaching above the ancle; others ſay it was only a low common ſhoe, the uſe of which on the Theatre was confined to Comedy. The Buſkin was a purple

ple coloured boot of a quadrangular form, which reached above the mid-leg, tied under the knee, and richly ornamented with jewels. The thickneſs of the ſole gave a conſiderable elevation to the ordinary ſtature; it was the peculiar diſtinction of Tragedy. It is ſaid to have been worn promiſcuouſly by either ſex; and that the Roman ladies uſed it to raiſe their height; however, the Sock and Buſkin have ever ſince been the characteriſtics of Comedy and Tragedy.

CHAP. III.

Of the antient Tragedy and Comedy in Greece; and their Authors.

THE licentious raillery indulged by the antients in their annual feſtivals gave riſe to the old ſatyric Drama; this was moſtly extemporaneous droll and mimicry, by way of dialogue. But, however, from this rude beginning, the Poets, who were the Divines and Philoſophers of the age, took the hint of conveying their inſtructions in a more pleaſing dreſs. Theſpis and Æſchylus were the firſt who made any ſort of regular tragic poems,

poems; Sophocles and Euripides gave it almost the polish of perfection. Eschylus infused a spirit of majesty and dignity into Tragedy, to which it was before unknown. His diction is sublime; but Sophocles his rival, who appeared about twenty-six years afterwards, improved it farther, and added a tenderness to his characters, which was wanting in the other; he was called the Bee, for the sweetness of his verses. Quintilian, speaking of these two Poets, says: *Tragoedias primum in lucem protulit Æschylus, sublimis gravis & grandiloquus, sæpe usque ad vitium. Longe clarius illustraverunt hoc opus Sophocles atque Euripides: Quorum in dispari dicendi vi, uter sit Poeta melior, inter plurimos queritur.* Lib. 10. chap. 1.

It is hard to say, whether Æschylus or Sophocles was the most excellent; but this we can with pleasure assure the public, Euripides has been translated by a gentleman of Trinity-college, Dublin, who intends to print it, as has Sophocles by a fellow of Trinity-colledge, Cambridge; and both of them are men capable of preserving all the spirit, and every excellency of the originals.

Tragedy

Tragedy having reached its summit of perfection under these three great masters, no others were afterwards taken notice of in a tragic way; and now Comedy began to be improved. The first comic Poets we read of among the Greeks, were Chronides, Magnes, and Phormas, who began to improve Comedy in Eschylus's time; and after his death, Cratinus, Plato, Epicharmes, Crates, Eupolis, Aristophanes. The unlimited raillery of Comedy was highly agreeable to the people of Athens, while that state continued free, and very justifiable while it was kept within the bounds of decency, mentioned by Horace; for the greatest men not being spared in their theatric entertainments, they were thereby kept from infringing on the liberties of the people. The Poets were reckoned the most useful members of the commonwealth, and [illegible] formed the offices of statesmen and philosophers, in reforming the government and instructing the people.

Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes were particularly excellent. We have no remains of any of their works but of the last, and of the many dramatic pieces he wrote, only eleven are

are transmitted down to us. He excelled in a spirit of satire or lampoon, and the Attic salt of the Greeks abounded more in him than in any other writer, but the rusticity of the age in which he lived is visible in the plainness of his characters. He drew them such as they were from life, but was not always happy in the choice; he had great faults and great beauties. His stile being warm, lively, and natural, and his characters just, he could not fail of pleasing a common taste; but the keenness of his wit did not entirely attone for his personal abuse, and low buffoonery. What amends could he make society for not only publicly abusing Socrates, but even going so far as to name him upon the Stage, when he himself was present.

But as even the most innocent designs may be perverted to the worst purposes, the poignancy of their satire, no longer pointed at the wicked, but was levelled at religion, virtue, and the most respectable characters, either by naming them publicly, or having masks painted to such a likeness that none could mistake them. This at length obliged the state to interpose, and to enact laws against all personal

ſonal invective for the future. From a conſideration of the nature of the exhibitions at this time permitted on the Greek Theatre, we are led to ſuppoſe that Ariſtophanes was then the Foote of Greece; and in many things the Engliſh is not inferior to the Grecian mimic.

The Poets being reſtrained from perſonal abuſe, ſoon found means to elude the law, and affixed feigned names to their characters, but ſtill drew them ſo like, that the ſpectators could not be eaſily miſtaken: by this means they enjoyed a double advantage, that of beſtowing their cenſure where they pleaſed, or where it was merited, with impunity, and at the ſame time of enjoying the delicate ſatisfaction of their Audience's finding out and comparing the portraits which they drew with their originals; this continued cuſtomary till the time of Alexander the Great, who obſerving that the licentious freedom of the Poets encreaſed daily, totally ſuppreſſed it. From hence the new Comedy aroſe, which no longer glanced at, or deſcribed particular perſons. The names and events were fictitious; and as the characters and manners were taken at large from real life, no particular

cular offence could be taken. Menander was the inventor or improver of this kind of Comedy, which was the fineſt and moſt uſeful of any; he introduced into his dramatic pieces an agreeable and refined vein of ſpirit and humour, confined within the ſtricteſt bounds of decency, to which his predeceſſor Ariſtophanes was almoſt a ſtranger. There are little or no remains of this excellent Poet handed down to us, though he is ſaid to have wrote and prepared upwards of a hundred Comedies for the Stage. We may form an idea of his merit from the character Quintilian has left of him, "That the brightneſs of his merit had entirely eclipſed the reputation of all the preceding writers in that way." Terence has derived the greateſt part of his fame from him, by tranſlating a few ſelect Comedies of his; and though the Latin bard is in general allowed to be very excellent, yet he is thought by the beſt judges to have fallen very ſhort of his great original.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Roman theatrical entertainments, and dramatic Authors.

WHEN the Romans began to enjoy the bleſſings of peace, they gradually refined themſelves from that ſavage ruſticity which their ſimple manner of living, and reſtleſs military genius had enured them to. The Greeks were their models both of learning and politeneſs; and from them they derived their firſt theatrical hints.

Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit & artes
Intulit agreſti latio.---- HOR.

About one hundred and thirty years after the Grecian Theatre had reached its full ſplendor, dramatic entertainments began to be encouraged in Rome; like the Grecian it took its riſe from the rural jocularity of the common people. At firſt they entertained themſelves in their feſtivals with irregular verſes, the product of jollity and wine, full of groſs raillery, attended with dances and low buffoonery. Theſe were called Feſcennine verſes, from

Fescennia, a city of Etruria, from whence they were brought to Rome.

Fescennina per hunc inventa licentia morem
Versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit.
HOR.

These afterwards were exchanged for more innocent entertainments, called *Satyræ*. They only consisted of inoffensive raillery, from whence all obscenity was banished; and they were the favourite diversion of the people, till Livius Andronicus and some others presented the people with several innocent characters in both kinds, which they had translated from the Greek; but none of their works have reached us. The only Poet of any note among them was Plautus. Nineteen of his theatrical pieces have been handed down to us. He was the same among the Romans as Aristophanes as among the Greeks; but is reputed to have come nearest of all the dramatists to the true Attic wit, which included every thing perfect. In some of his writings he has excellent maxims for the conduct of human life; but in others he often degenerates into absurdity and obscenity; which indeed was the fault of the Pagan world:

yet his ſcenes are full of humour, and his characters greatly diverſified. The *Attellanæ fabulæ* ſucceeded the *Satyræ*, which were ſelect pieces of wit and merriment, intended to relieve the heavineſs of Tragedy; and became ever afterwards inſeparably connected with it; I apprehend not much unlike our Tragi-comedy. Theſe, madam Dacier remarks, were in ſo much eſteem, "That the "perſons who acted in them were not rank-"ed with the comedians, nor obliged to un-"maſk on the ſtage when they played ill, as "others were, and, as a peculiar honour, they "were allowed to inliſt in the army; there-"fore ſow and trivial verſes were beneath "the dignity of the *Attellanæ*."

Among the Romans the dramatic dreſſes were diſtinguiſhed into ſeveral kinds: viz. *Togatæ*, *Palliatæ*, *Prætextæ*, *Trabeates*, and *Tabernariæ*, and varied upon the Stage as the characters required.

The Toga being the common habit of the Romans, was uſed by their actors, when any ſtory drawn from the manners of common life,

life, wherewith it was to be ſuppoſed the Actors and audience were perfectly well acquainted, was repreſented.

The Palliatæ were uſed when thoſe Tragedies or Comedies were acted which were of Greek original; the Pallium or Cloak being the ordinary dreſs of that nation. Here it may not be improperly remarked, how very careful they were in adjuſting the propriety of their dreſs to their character, as well as their voice and action.

The Prætextæ were of a more exalted and ſerious caſt; poſſibly, the difference between them and the Togatæ was much the ſame as that which we ſuppoſe to be between high or genteel Comedy, and the middling or low. Their names imply as much. The Prætextæ were, the habits bordered with purple, worn by the magiſtrates and Roman gentry; and the Toga was the uſual dreſs of the common people.

The Romans were pleaſed alſo to diſtinguiſh the inferior characters of their Drama, by

another name, viz. Trabeates. The dreſs of this name was appropriated to ſoldiers and ſailors, and others of that caſt.

To which we may add, thoſe called Tabernariæ, which were ſketches of the manners of the meaneſt people, ſuch as conſtitute the Dramatis Perſonæ of our farces.

The actors of Mimes performed bare-footed; they were pieces of the moſt low and farcical kind, and moſtly exhibited in dumb ſhow, from whence our preſent Pantomimes are derived; but they were much more ingenious in their art, and could repreſent the thoughts and paſſions with ſuch admirable dexterity, that a foreign prince having ſeen one of them perform in Rome, requeſted, as a favour of Nero, that he might be allowed to carry with him to his own country that Mime, who could by his expreſſive action alone convey his ſentiments to people of the moſt different languages.

The Roman Theatre was in its meridian of perfection in the time of Terence. Of all the Roman dramatic writers he came the

neareſt

neareſt to the elegant ſimplicity and Attic purity of the Grecian Drama; he made Menander ſpeak the language of Rome with the utmoſt grace and delicacy, ſuited his characters to nature and truth, and drew the manners of the Romans with the moſt happy propriety. Plautus has more life and variety; his beauties appear ſuddenly and ſurpriſingly; in Terence they preſerve a conſtant glow and uniformity, and leave us nothing more to deſire.

There were ſeveral other poets who attempted Tragedy and Comedy at Rome; but as none of their pieces having ſurvived, we can form no idea of their merits in either way.

Theſe theatric pieces both of Greece and Rome were interſperſed with Choruſſes, which explained the ſubject to the ſpectators, and made moral remarks on it.

The muſic played during the whole performance. The muſician had two flutes of different ſize, the one a baſe and the other a treble. The baſe had but a ſmall number of holes, the treble a great variety, and gave a

ſhrill ſharp ſ-und; the flutes were ſometimes unequal, but had a certain agreement between them, like our thirds, fifths, or octaves. The muſic was ſometimes guided by the ſubject of the play; ſo that the people could tell beforehand, from hearing theſe inſtruments, what the performance was to be; at other times it was adapted to the occaſion. If the play was performed at a funeral ſolemnity, the muſic was grave, and ſlow; if on a joyful occaſion, it was briſk and airy, and for religious incidents it was made to partake of the nature of both.

CHAP. V.

Of the ancient Actors.

IT is certain that Theſpis and Æſchylus, the firſt founders of the antient Drama, were performers of their own pieces: the one having added a ſecond or third actor, or geſticulator, to enliven the old heroic ballads of his time, and the other given them the Maſk, Sock, and Buſkin.

How paſſionately fond the ancients were of dramatic entertainments, may be inferred from the

the ſumptuous Theatres they erected, and the immenſe ſalaries they paid to thoſe Actors who excelled in their profeſſion.

At Athens the Actors were always perſons of good birth and education: Poets, Orators, and even Kings, did not diſdain to appear on the Stage, as Cornelius Nepos informs us; this being thought in thoſe times of ſimplicity, neither injurious to reputation, nor deſcending from dignity. And tho' Players were not in ſo much eſtimation at Rome, as their Stage had not attained the perfection of the Grecian, and becauſe of the warlike genius of that people; yet if they were artiſts in their buſineſs, and men of probity in their private lives, they were reſpected and eſteemed by the chief perſons of the commonwealth.

It is certain, that they neglected no method, and ſpared no expence which could contribute to the perfection of their theatrical entertainments; and the high ſenſe they had of merit in this way, may be learned from the great encomiums they have handed down to us of two of their moſt eminent performers,

Roſcius and Æſopius; encomiums which we are certain were only paid to real merit by a people of the moſt refined ears and delicate ſenſibility, who only were the beſt judges of it.

Roſcius was born at Lanuvium, and brought up at Selonium, a village about ſixteen miles diſtance from Rome, on the Appian way; he gave ſuch early proofs of the pregnancy of his genius, that the greateſt lords of Rome undertook the care of his education, and gave his talents a cultivation agreeable to their natural bent. He is deſcribed as moſt agreeable in his perſon, and the model to all the youth in Rome of every thing that was truly graceful. Cicero ſays, that he was formed both to move and to pleaſe; and that "he was ſo excellent an artiſt, that he ſeemed the only perſon who deſerved to tread the Stage; yet ſo excellent a man in all other reſpects, that he ſeemed the only man of all others, who ſhould not have taken up that profeſſion." *Cum artifex ejuſmodi ſit, ut ſolus dignus videatur eſſe quam in ſcena ſpectatur; tum vir ejuſmodi eſt ut ſolus dignus videatur qui in ea non accedat.*

The

The ſame author informs us, "that his excellencies became at length proverbial; and the greateſt praiſe that could be given to men of genius in any particular profeſſion, was, that each was a Roſcius in his art." *Jamdiu conſecutus eſt, ut in quo quiſquis artifex excelleret, is in ſuo genere Roſcius diceretur.* Cic. de Orat. Lib. 1.

Notwithſtanding the agreeableneſs of his perſon, he is ſaid to have had a ſquint in his eyes; which defect his maſk in a great meaſure concealed, yet left enough to diſcover the fire there which paſſion had lighted up. This is what, I ſuppoſe, Cicero alludes to in his ſecond Book de Orat. *Sepe ipſum vidi, cum ex perſona mihi ardere oculi hominis hiſtrionis viderentur.* Though doubtleſs there were ſome parts in which this natural defect was not much obſerved, ſuch as Paraſites, and the like; and poſſibly this might have been one reaſon why he confined himſelf chiefly to Comedy.

Roſcius was Cicero's friend and inſtructor in the art of Oratory, and that great model of oratory, in giving rules to his pupil to prepare for

for great movements, after ſaying, that an orator ought to give his hearers time to breathe, and let their admiration reſt, and to imitate the Painters who throw into ſhade and diſtance ſome part of their pictures, that the reſt may ſeem to riſe with greater effect, introduces Roſcius as an example of this, ſounding ſome verſes with mildneſs and negligence, in order to raiſe the following ones to their true pitch of paſſion; ſo that it is likely he underſtood the contraſt of *clara obſcura* perfectly well.

It is obſerved by a writer on this ſubject, that, " with the antients the Sock and Buſkin never interfered; Sophocles and Euripides never wrote Comedies, nor Ariſtophanes and Menander Tragedies."---- In like manner, " Roſcius finding the ſtrength of his genius to lie in Comedy, attached himſelf wholly to it, as Æſopus, for the ſame reaſon, only aſſumed tragic characters." (*Roſcius citatior Æſopus gravior fuit, quod hic in Tragedias, ille in Comedias egit.*---Quint.) This, by the way, is a uſeful hint, both to our Poets and Players, to chuſe ſubjects only for writing and acting to which their abilities are adequate.

No

No body is ignorant of the ſhare which Roſcius had in Cicero's friendſhip; and it was by the advantage of his precepts and example, "that he laid the foundation of his oratorial fame, and improved himſelf in the art of elocution. Roſcius during the time of his friend's exile, repeated ſome verſes on the exile of Telamon, and the ſufferings of Priam, with ſuch deep and feeling diſtreſs, that the whole audience perceived to whom he alluded, his very enemies wept, and Cicero was ſoon after recalled from baniſhment." The high value which the Romans ſet upon the talents of this Actor, will appear by the immenſe eſtate he left his ſon, which was valued at two hundred thouſand pounds ſterling; it was this ſon who afterwards in a fit of wantonneſs, diſſolved ſome pearls of great value in his liquor, and drank them off.

The ancient Actors ſtudied the art of touching the affections, with great induſtry. Æſopus, Plutarch tells us, had wrought himſelf once up to ſuch a tranſport of rage, in repreſenting Atreus deliberating how he ſhould avenge himſelf of Thyeſtes, that he ſtruck one of his ſervants haſtily croſſing the Stage

with his truncheon, and laid him dead on the spot. Polus, another Actor of eminence, brought the urn of his beloved child on the Stage, instead of the supposed one of Orestes. This filled him with such real grief, as was soon sympathetically felt by his audience. And thus we see no expedient was neglected, which could give the performance the greater appearance of reality.

CHAP. VI.

Of the first rise of the modern Theatre, particularly the British.

WHEN the Roman empire was overwhelmed by the invasions of the northern nations, when Gothic barbarity and monkish ignorance darkened the world, the Stage declined, the Muses withdrew, and polite literature was no more. Then monstrous fictions of giants, champions, and distressed damsels, were spun out in monasteries by dreaming monks; and, to the destruction of reason and common sense became the most favourite amusements of the people.

The

The Mimi of the Romans were the laſt who quitted the Stage; and theſe became ſo low and degenerate, as to ſtrole from town to town, repreſenting the moſt contemptible, and low buffooneries; other nations adopted them, and they were well known all over Europe, about the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Moſt of their exhibitions were extempore; and from their talents at ridicule and burleſque, the words Mimic and Mimicry have been appropriated to all characters of this kind.

In this country they were called Mummers, a ſmall change of the word Mimi or Mimics; they wore maſks, and were otherwaysdiſguiſed, which gave them an opportunity of committing many outrages with impunity; ſo that in the time of Edw. III. they were ſuppreſſed by authority. Much about this time we may date the introduction of the ſacred myſteries preſented by way of interludes. Theſe were ſubjects borrowed from the ſcripture, and were the prevailing taſte of Europe, at that time.

They

They were in the highest reputation here in the reign of Richard II. Henry IV. and even down to the reign of Henry VIII. In Richard the second's time, the scholars of St. Paul's presented them at a very great expence at Christmas; the parish-clerks did the same at Skinner's Well in 1390; and in 1409 at Clerkenwell, which place obtained its name from their custom of performing there. It is not improbable that these representations were almost as early as the Conquest, but interlarded at intervals with the lowest buffoonery, to amuse the populace.

The subjects of those Plays were not always taken from the scriptures, but also from the miracles supposed to be wrought by saints, confessors, and martyrs, in those days of darkness and superstition. They were acted, both in private houses, and on public Stages. When one of these miracles was to be represented, an amphitheatre used to be erected in an open field; into which devils, fools, &c. were introduced much like the antient *Satyræ*, and these unaccountable medleys were the entertainments of the country-people, who resorted thither from all parts.

The

The ſtupidity, as well as profanity, of thoſe religious repreſentations, was the occaſion of their ſuppreſſion; to theſe ſucceeded Myſteries, which had ſomething of a more regular form and meaning. They were allegorical repreſentations of the virtues and vices of the mind, and with them common ſenſe and Poetry began to dawn upon the world. The Provençal Poets were the firſt refiners of the French language, and gave the firſt hints of reformation to the Drama. The French, Spaniards, and other nations, had Poets of the like kind, who celebrated their national heroes in their paſtoral ſonnets, and perhaps compoſed the Poetry of thoſe myſteries. They were not aboliſhed in Europe till about the ſixteenth century; at which time learning and the polite arts were revived in Italy, under the culture and influence of the family of the Medicis, whoſe polite taſte directed that of the public to whatever was beautiful.

At the time of the Reformation there were cartain dramatic moral repreſentations ſo contrived, as to influence and coincide with the prevailing opinions of the times; this might have been the occaſion of a law enact-

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ed in Henry the eighth's time, to restrain the liberties they took in striking at the newly received doctrine. The performers of those pieces had no regular establishment; they resorted to noblemen's palaces, and private houses, and the pieces themselves were so disposed, as that five or six persons could represent a great variety of characters; they were in vogue even in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and Shakespear has made several satyrical allusions to them in his Plays.

Thus, the British Stage, like the antient, had almost the same rude beginnings, and it continued in a state of imperfection till the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth, when Shakespear and Jonson arose, the glories of their age and nation. The first by the force of heaven-born genius, and the other with the most consummate learning and art, almost all at once raised the Stage to such dignity and perfection as has never since been out-done.

Under the influence of this excellent princess, learning and the polite arts flourished along with the Stage.

The eſteem which ſhe had for the Drama contributed not a little to its advancement in her reign. She was the firſt who reduced its profeſſors into a more regular company, and dignified them with privileges that brought them into higher eſtimation than ever, and ſet them far above the contempt of their puritanical cenſurers. They were called her Majeſty's Servants and ſworn Comedians. And ſo prevalent was now the theatrical taſte, that many noblemen and private gentlemen entertained companies of Comedians for their own private entertainment.

The children of St. Paul's ſchool, who performed the Myſteries in 1578, and the parish-clerks, who performed about twelve years afterwards, are the earlieſt companies we read of: the children of St. Paul's are ſaid to have continued acting (thoſe Moralities I ſuppoſe) down to the year 1618, long after Tragedy and Comedy were introduced.

Mr. Richard Edwards was proprietor of the firſt company, under Queen Elizabeth, called the children of the chapel. The children of the Revels after them became very fa-

mous; and moſt of Shakeſpear's and Jonſon's Plays were firſt performed by them. So univerſal was a theatrical inclination at that time, that Plays were acted, not only by the regular companies already mentioned, but by private gentlemen, ſtudents in the univerſity, Inns of Court, and even by the London prentices.

There were ſeventeen Play-houſes built in different parts of the town, from the years 1570 to 1630, and all filled with different companies. Thoſe in Black-friars, Saliſbury-court, and the Cock-pit, were covered, and pieces acted in them by candle-light; the others were open at top (like the antient Theatres) and their repreſentations made by day-light. Our anceſtors were ſo early in timing both their buſineſs and diverſion, that they began to act about four in the afternoon, and had done early in the night.

At that time mere force of genius ſupported the Stage; for, in Shakeſpear's time it was quite undecorated, and had only a blanket or curtain of coarſe linſey-wolſey cloth, which, when drawn up, diſcovered nothing extraordinary. The walls, at beſt, were hung with old tapeſtry,

tapeſtry, and ſometimes they were but plainly matted; ſo that the audience were obliged to ſupply the place of the Scene by the ſtrength of imagination alone.

It is probable that the low prices of the Theatre prevented its decoraton at that time. Thoſe inimitable authors could not be ignorant of the pomp of the antients; yet as the plain honeſty of the age was ſufficiently delighted more with language and ſentiment than ſhew, the Authors or Managers looked no farther; and both parties were ſatisfied.

This was the ſtate of the Stage in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James the firſt; but when King Charles the firſt came in, he, being a Prince of a melancholy auſtere temper, did not give much attention to the improvement of the Theatre; and choſe maſks, and moral repreſentations, as more innocent entertainments. Being an exquiſite judge of Painting and Muſic, he ſpared no expence of either, when they were exhibited at court. The following, among others, were performed at that time:

Coelum Britannicum, a Masque, wrote by Carewe, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, set to music by Mr. Laws, and performed by Charles I. and his court at Whitehall in 1633.

The Vision of the twelve Goddesses; by Daniel. Performed by the Queen and her Ladies at Hampton-court, 1623.

Luminalia; or, the Festival of Light. A Mask, performed on Shrove-tuesday night, by the Queen and her Ladies, 1637.

Sr. Wm. Davenant's Temple of Love. Performed at Whitehall, by Q. Henrietta, the Marchioness of Hamilton, Countess of Oxford, Duke of Lenox, Earls of Newport, Desmond, &c.

The Scenery and Machinery were contrived by that celebrated artist Inigo Jones.

The troubles and confusions of this Prince's reign, and above all the hypocritical severity of the fanatics, who had obtained but too much influence

influence in the public affairs, soon suppressed and silenced the Stage.

During the commonwealth, the Players were persecuted and dispersed. They had no other livelihoood, but by going five, or six, in a party, and performing select Scenes out of the most celebrated Plays at gentlemen's houses. These Scenes were afterwards collected, and published in one volume in 1670, by one Francis Kirkman, who had been one of those itinerant Actors, under the name of The Wits, or Sport upon Sport. One was called The Humours of the Lame Commonwealth. This is only the Scene out of the Royal Merchant, where the beggars chuse a king. Another the Grave-makers, which was the first and second Scenes of the fifth Act of Hamlet. Mr. Cox, the Comedian, composed several new ones, which he added to this collection. He was the principal Actor in those pieces; and performed at Oxford, during the Usurpation, with very great applause.

The only entertainments which were exhibited at that time in London, were Operas. Sir Wm. Davenant, notwithstanding the dis-

like which those in power had to dramatic entertainments, had interest enough to have these permitted. They consisted of declamation and music. The words were of his own composition, and may be found in his works; the Music by Coleman and Laws, two eminent masters, and were performed at Rutland-house: after tolerable success there, he removed to the Cock-pit in Drury-lane. One of them entitled, "The cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru, expressed by vocal and instrumental Music, and by art of perspective in Scenes, represented daily at the Cock-pit in Drury-lane, at three in the afternoon punctually, 1658." This is said to have been read and approved of by Cromwell; as it contained some severe strokes on the Spaniards, with whom he was at variance.

When the gloom of civil dissention was cleared up, Monarchy and the Stage were restored together. The scattered remnants of six Play-houses, which had subsisted in Charles I's time, were then formed into one company, and acted for the first time at the Red bull Play-house, in St. John's street, They afterwards built another

other in Clare-ſtreet, Clare-market, in both which places they acted from 1660, to 1663.

About this time, Mr. Thomas Killigrew obtained a patent from the King for erecting a company of Comedians, who were thence-forwards called his Majeſty's Company of Comedians, and acted under Mr. Killigrew's directions at Drury-lane.

Previous to this, in 1659, Mr. Rhodes, a Bookſeller at Charing-croſs, who had been formerly Wardrobe-keeper to King Charles I's Comedians in Black-friars, had obtained a licence to ſet up a company of Players at the ſame place. Thoſe celebrated Actors, Betterton, and Kynaſton (who were his apprentices) performed at this Theatre; the former in men's, the latter in women's parts. And Sir William Davenant having obtained a patent for erecting a company, under the title of the Duke of York's company, took Mr. Betterton, and all that remained of Mr. Rhode's company into it. In 1663, he opened his Theatre in Lincoln's-inn-fields with a Tragedy of his own writing, called The Siege of Rhodes, where the Stage was firſt improved

by Scenery. Both these companies were under the patronage of the King and Duke, and greatly encouraged by the Public. By a private agreement, these companies were never to act the same Play at both houses, which must have added greatly to the entertainment of the town. But Davenant finding that Killigrew's company had better performers, and met with greater success, was resolved to rival them by feasting the eye and ear, independent of the understanding. Dramatic Operas were now for the first time introduced; and in them were united all the elegancies of Music and Painting.

Downes tells us, this company continued acting at Lincoln's-inn-fields till 1671; but this Theatre not proving sufficiently commodious, they built a very elegant one in Dorset-garden. Mr. Betterton, while this Theatre was building, went over to France, by the direction of King Charles II. to take a view of their Scenery and Machinery; and on his return very much improved the English Stage in both. These expensive decorations obliged Sir William from that time to raise the prices of admittance. The boxes, which were formerly but half a crown, he raised to four shillings;

lings; the pit from eighteen pence to half a crown; the first gallery from a shilling to eighteen pence; and the upper gallery from sixpence to a shilling.

The principal Actors in Killigrew's company growing old, and the audiences declining, the two companies united in 1685.

The Actors of Killigrew's company were as follow: The famous Mr. Lacy, (who was an excellent low Comedian, and so pleasing to King Charles II. that he had his picture drawn in three several characters, which are now at Windsor; his principal character was Falstaff,) Bird, Bust, Cartwright, Clun, Shatterell, Kynaston, Winterfel, Griffin, Goodman. The women were, Mrs. Marshall, Uphill, James, Rutter, Knight, Bootel, and the celebrated Nell Gwin. In Mr. Rhodes's company were Betterton, Sheppy, Lovel, Underhill, R. Noakes, Turner, Dixon; and the following men performed women's parts, viz. Kynaston, J. Noakes, Wm. Betterton, Angel Mosely, Floyd, &c. To this company Sir Wiliam Davenant added Harris Price, Richards, Smith, Blayden, Sandford, Medbourne,

bourne, Young, Norris; and women, Mrs. Davenport, Saunderson, Davis, Long, Gibbs, Norris, Holden, and Jennings.

It is somewhat surprising, that till this time women were never brought upon the Stage. Had there been a Cibber or Pritchard in those days, we might have expected that their inimitable performances would have excited the authors to draw their female characters in a more extensive manner, which would have added greatly to the excellence of the Drama.

CHAP. VII.

Of the most eminent British Actors from Queen Elizabeth's time to the Restoration.

AS the materials we are furnished with, relative to these old theatrical worthies, are so few and imperfect, it cannot be expected an exact character can be given either of their excellencies or imperfections; and, had it been customary with the first dramatic authors, to annex the Player's names to the parts they performed, we might form a tolerable judgment of them. It would have

have been alſo a ſatisfaction to the world, to have known to whom the principal characters were entruſted, and particularly what parts were performed by our immortal genius, Shakeſpeare, while he continued on the Stage.

Such of them whoſe merits diſtinguiſhed them among their cotemporaries, and obtained thoſe high applauſes from our forefathers, (who were no indifferent judges) were as follow:

Burbage ſtands foremoſt in the liſt of Actors prefixed to Shakeſpear's Plays, publiſhed by Hemings and Condell; and the excellent character which has been handed down to us of him, requires that here alſo he ſhould be firſt mentioned. Flecknoe wrote a parallel between Burbage and Hart.

Sir Richard Baker ſays of him and Allen, "that they were two ſuch Actors as no age "muſt ever look to ſee the like." His epitaph, preſerved by Cambden, is only *Exit Burbage*, a laconic compliment of equal honour to him in his profeſſion of Actor, as that of "O rare Ben Jonſon" is to the latter as a Poet. He

was

was the original Richard III. and was joined with Shakeſpear, Fletcher, Hemings, and Condell, in the licence granted by King James I. to act Plays in any part of England. There is a ſtory of theſe two Actors, which for the ſake of the entertainment it may afford the reader, I ſhall here introduce, without any precurſory excuſe.

One evening when Richard III. was to be performed, Shakeſpear obſerved a young woman delivering a meſſage to Burbage in ſo cautious a manner as excited his curioſity to liſten to. It imported, that her maſter was gone out of town that morning, and her miſtreſs would be glad of his company after Play; and to know what ſignal he would appoint for admittance. Burbage replied, three taps at the door, and it is I, Richard the Third. She immediately withdrew, and Shakeſpear followed 'till he obſerved her to go into a houſe in the city; and enquiring in the neighbourhood, he was informed that a young lady lived there, the favourite of an old rich merchant. Near the appointed time of meeting, Shakeſpear thought proper to anticipate Mr. Burbage, and was introduced by the concert-

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ed ſignal. The lady was very much ſurpriſed at Shakeſpear's preſuming to act Mr. Burbage's part; but as he (who had wrote Romeo and Juliet) we may be certain did not want wit or eloquence to apologize for the intruſion, ſhe was ſoon pacified, and they were mutually happy till Burbage came to the door, and repeated the ſame ſignal; but Shakeſpear popping his head out of the window, bid him be gone; for that William the Conqueror had reigned before Richard III.

Lowin, as Downs tells us, was the original Henry VIII. and, as he was taught it by Shakeſpear, muſt have done it to the greateſt advantage. He afterwards became Sir William Davenant's favourite Actor; and from what that gentleman recollected of his performance, he inſtructed Mr. Betterton, who uſed often to acknowledge, that he was indebted for all the applauſe he had received in that character to Sir William's friendly hints.---Lowen was very excellent in Comedy, particularly in the characters of Moroſe, Volpone, Mamon, and Falſtaff. In the latter part of his life, he kept the three pigeons, an inn in Brentford, and died in advanced age and great poverty, neglected

lected and forgot by those in whom he had often delighted in his days of perfection. He is said to have been a favourite of Massinger, and one of the principal Actors in his Plays. In a copy of verses before the Tragedy of the Roman Actor, by Massinger, he pays the following compliment to the author:

Then (gentle friend) I should not blush to bee
Rank'd 'mongst those worthy ones, which here I see
Ushering this work, but why I write to thee
Is to professe our loves antiquitie,
Which to this Tragedie must give my test,
Thou hast made many good, but this thy best.

Joseph Taylor performed Paris the Tragedian in this Play. He is mentioned as an Actor of great merit; and was the original Hamlet of the author's instruction. Mr. Betterton was also instructed in this character by Sir William Davenant, who remembered Taylor; and to these hints was owing that he always performed it with uncommon applause. Taylor was also very excellent in Iago. The only comic characters which we learn of his performance, were

were True Wit in the Silent Woman, and Face in the Alchymiſt. The author of the Jew of Malta, ſays, that Maſon (another great performer) and Taylor, performed their parts with excellence beyond conception: he died at Richmond. The high opinion which theſe two Actors were held in, may be inferred from theſe lines, in a Satyr againſt Ben Johnſon.

Let Lowin ceaſe, and Taylor ſcorn to touch
The loathed Stage ſince thou haſt made it ſuch.

Allen, ſays Baker in his Chronicle, "was as much valued for his honeſty, as for his abilities in his profeſſion." He built a Theatre called the Fortune, acquired a good eſtate, and died in 1620. The following epitaph was intended for him,

Here lies Edward Allen, the Roſcius of his age, who, as he outacted all others, outacted himſelf before his death, by erecting Dulwich college in Surry.

We are told he deſigned this college for ſix men and ſix women, ſuperannuated perſons who belonged to the London Theatres, with ſix of their children; but one of the managers refuſing to admit a perſon to

be door-keeper whom he recommended, he converted his bounty another way, encreaſed the number of children to twelve, to be maintained and educated there from the age of four to fifteen, directed the governor ſhould be a batchelor, and one of his own name, with a warden and four fellows. The college is a noble building, with a handſome chapel and elegant altar-piece, well painted, and a fine organ, with beautiful improvements.

The Jew of Malta is the only part in Tragedy, which, as far as we can learn, Allen appeared in; the Play written by Marloe, a cotemporary Actor with Shakeſpear. The author of the prologue to this Play, ſays thus of him,

Whom we may rank with (doing no more wrong)
Proteus for ſhape, and Roſcius for a tongue.

But Ben Jonſon, who never praiſed injudiciouſly, and whoſe great favourite he was, pays him a much higher compliment:

If Rome ſo great, and in her wiſeſt age,
Fear'd not to boaſt the glories of her Stage,
As ſkilful Roſcius, and grave Æſop, men,
Yet crown'd with honours as with riches then,

Who had no less a trumpet of their name
Than Cicero, whose very breath was fame:
How can so great example die in me,
That Allen I shou'd pause to publish thee,
Who both their graces in thyself hast more
Outstript, than they did all that went before;
And present worth in all doth so contract,
As others speak, but only thou dost act.
Wear this renown: 'tis just that who did give
So many Poets Lift by one shou'd live.

In a list of old dramatic pieces, we find one with this title: A Knack to know a Knave, 1594, several times acted by E. Alleh, with Kempe's applauded merriments of the men of Gotham in receiving the King into Gotham.

Hemings and Condell were two celebrated Actors in Shakespear's, Johnson's, and Fletcher's Plays, the one in Tragedy, the other in Comedy; but chiefly known for being the first editors of Shakespear, seven years after his death.

Greene was a famous low Comedian, and noted for his performance of Bubble, in a Comedy written by Cooke, who in compliment

to him, called it afterwards his *tu quoque*: Heywood ſays, there was not an actor of his nature in his time of better ability in his performance, more applauded by the audience, of greater grace at court, or of more general love in the city.

Kempe and Tarleton were eminent in their way of low comedy; and particularly excelled in the clowns. They were both favourites of queen Elizabeth and their audience: Kempe and Burbage were the Betterton and Nokes of their age; and Sir Richard Baker ſays of Tarleton, that he never had his match, nor never will have. His epitaph, preſerved by Campden, is thus:

Hic ſitus eſt, cujus actio vox, vultus poſſit,
Ex Heraclito reddere Democritum.

Robinſon was eſteemed a capital actor, and muſt have been truly ſo, as the famous Hart was formed by him. He was an actor of great merit, and one of the principal performers in Killigrew's company: he was noted for his performance of Othello, Brutus, and Alexander; in this laſt he appeared with ſuch majeſty and dignity, that one of the courtiers of

of the first rank was pleased to say, he might teach any King on the earth how to comport himself. He also excelled in many parts of comedy, such as Manly, Plain Dealer, Horner in the Country Wife, Don John, Mosca, &c. Rhymer the critic says thus of him, That he always pleased, and what he delivered every one took upon consent; their eyes were prepossessed and charmed by his action, before aught of the poet's could approach their ears; and to the most wretched of characters he gave a lustre and brilliancy which dazzled the sight, and the deformities of the poetry could not be perceived. He was a royalist, and was killed at the battle of Basinghouse by one of the long-ear'd Phanatics, who, after he was taken prisoner, and had surrendered his arms, shot him through the head, saying, *Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently.*

He performed the part of Messalina the Roman empress in a tragedy of that name, wrote by Richards in 1640, and has wrote a copy of verses on the author, which is printed before this play.

Theſe are the moſt material accounts of the ſtage and eminent actors of this kingdom, worth mentioning, down to the Reſtoration. Mr. C. Cibber, in the Apology for his life, has, in general, ſo judiciouſly drawn the characters of thoſe who flouriſhed from that time to his quitting the theatre, that it would be ſuperfluous to mention them here. For thoſe of the preſent performers, the reader is referred to the enſuing chapter.

PART IV.

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION of the Merits and Demerits of the principal Performers in England and Ireland.

CHAP. I.

An Addreſs to Audiences.

THE ſimplicity of nature is her choiceſt beauty; to examine it with the eye of an unrivalled maſter; to pluck the ſweeteſt of her flowers; to tranſplant them into his own garden; to cheriſh and raiſe them to perfection, which Nature herſelf could ſcarcely tranſcend, was a taſk to which the genius of Shakeſpeare only was equal. He knew the ſprings of all our affections, the ſource of every paſ-

ſion, and its method of acting upon the human mind; when he had explored, he painted them with boldneſs; he delineated them ſo exactly, the aſſimilation was ſo nice, that the copy was ſcarcely to be diſtinguiſhed from the original. Who is there that reads Clarence's dream in Richard the ſecond, that does not ſee every image that he deſcribes, and feel the effect which he attributes to it: his account of the ſtruggles which he ſuppoſed himſelf to have with the waters before he was ſuffocated, is ſo ſtriking; the torments that he went thro' after death are ſo powerfully painted, that one would be almoſt apt to believe, that Shakeſpeare had paſſed by the channel of drowning to the regions of immortality, from whence, by ſome ſtrange chance, he eſcaped back into life, like ſome of thoſe viſionaries whom we find mentioned in the Roman Martyrology and Venerable Bede. The beſt writers of the Drama, who have ſucceeded this great maſter, whether in the different provinces of ſerious or comic, are in compariſon of him but twilight to ſunſhine.

To copy his manners, to catch his ſpirit, and illuſtrate his text, is a taſk to which

ſcarcely any actor was ever equal; he who is, muſt confeſſedly be allowed to ſtand among performers in a light as ſuperior as Shakeſpeare does among poets; and there is no body who has traced Mr. Garrick through all his walks but what will allow him deſervedly the ſituation.

Nature has furniſhed him with great ſenſibility and fire, with a lively eye, not quite black, but extremely dark and piercing; his countenance taken altogether is ſtrikingly marking; and no man is better able to ſuit his natural advantages to the different characters in which he appears. The perfection of his performance is ſufficiently acknowledged by the repeated approbation of his audience. It would require more than a folio volume to deſcribe the various excellencies which this gentleman diſplays in his caſt of characters, whether tragic or comic. We ſhall paſs ſome ſtrictures upon his appearances in a few parts of each; and thence ſome idea of his merit may be fairly deduced. Perhaps it may be ſaid, with as much juſtice as truth, that he is the greateſt, if not the only actor who has appeared in Lear and Abel Drugger; Mac-

beth and Benedict; Hamlet and Sir John Brute; Chamont and Archer; Tancred and Ranger; Jaffeir and Bays; Lusignan and Lord Chalkstone. It would be difficult to determine which of the tragic characters we have mentioned require the strongest attributes; which of the comic stand in need of the greatest abilities.

His performance in Lear is certainly very capital; nor is it in man's power to vary the passions which actuate that character in a manner more striking. If it was the master-piece of Shakespeare to write, so is it the Chef-d'œuvres of Garrick to act: nor is there a beauty of the Play which he does not wonderfully illustrate; and thro' the whole his genius appears almost as powerfully creative as that of the Divine Author, from whose pen it dropped.

Whether we consider him seated upon his throne in fullness of a content, which he shares out with infinite complacency among his *pelican daughters*; raving at the affronts under which they lay him; drenched in the *pitiless storm*; exposed to all the fury of the heavens; or mad as the vexed winds; whether

ther we view him wearied *with vile croſſes*; or at the laſt extremity, calling forth all the ſtrength and ſpirits of an almoſt exhauſted old man, to free himſelf from ſurrounding peril, and ſave his dear Cordelia, we muſt pronounce him inimitable. His knowledge of the paſſions, and their ſeveral methods of operating on the mind, are by him through the whole very properly marked. With what emphatic rage does he pronounce,

Darkneſs and devils---Saddle my horſes;
Call my train together.

What heart of ſenſibility is there that does not ſwell with horror at the awful ſolemnity with which he utters the curſe of,

Blaſts upon thee,
Th' untented woundings of a a father's curſe
Pierce every ſenſe.

How beautifully expreſſive appears the bitterneſs of his anger ſubſiding into a reflection on his own folly? how artfully does he endeavour to ſuppreſs the juſtly provoked tear, when he ſays,

Old fond eyes,
Lament this cauſe again, I'll pluck ye out,

And

And caſt ye with the water that ye loſe
To temper clay.

His manner of conveying his feeling here, makes every other eye overflow; the alteration of his countenance from ſenſibility to madneſs; the fooliſh laugh, and indeed his whole performance of the mad part, muſt impreſs every body capable of the ſmalleſt tenderneſs. I never ſee him coming down from one corner of the Stage, with his old grey hair ſtanding, as it were, erect upon his head, his face filled with horror and attention, his hands expanded, and his whole frame actuated by a dreadful ſolemnity, but I am aſtounded, and ſhare in all his diſtreſſes; nay, as Shakeſpeare in ſome different place, with elegance, obſerves upon another ſubject, *one might interpret from the dumbneſs of his geſture.* Methink I ſhare in his calamities, I feel the dark drifting rain, and the ſharp tempeſt, with his

Blow winds---'till you have burſt your cheeks.

It is here that the power of his eye, correſponding with an attitude peculiar to his own judgment, and proper to the ſituation, is of force ſufficient to thrill through the veins,

and

and pierce the hardeſt boſom. What ſuperlative tenderneſs does he diſcover in ſpeaking theſe words:

Pray do not mock me; for as I am a man,
I take that lady to be my child Cordelia.

His whole performance in the fifth act of this Play is inimitably graceful. The ſpirit which he exerts, the endeavouring to collect all his ſtrength to preſerve his dear daughter from the hand of the aſſaſſin, are not to be deſcribed. His leaning againſt the ſide of the ſcene, panting for want of breath, as if exhauſted, and his recollecting the feat, and replying to the fellow who obſerves, that the good old King has ſlain two of them, *Did I not, fellow?* have more force, more ſtrength, and more propriety of character, than I ever ſaw in any other Actor. Nor, in ſaying this, let it be at all ſuppoſed, that I have the leaſt deſign of detracting from the merits of Mr. Barry. It muſt be allowed, that he utters the imprecations againſt his children in a maſterly manner; and that he excels in many places where no great hurry of paſſion agitates the ſcene: but there is a vivacity, a ſtrain of judgment, and a pleaſing power of varying

and

and keeping up the passions in Garrick, which Barry never can reach. It has been conjectured by a friend of mine, whose critical judgment I highly respect, that from Garrick's performance of the mad scenes in Lear, Gray, in his poem on Eaton college, borrowed the idea of

Moody madness laughing wild.

Shakespeare was always particularly careful in his characters, and in none more so than in Richard the Third; whom history has represented as the poet has drawn, deformed, wicked, perfidious, splenetic, and ambitious: All these marks of the character are spiritedly preserved by Garrick in the part. In the first act we see in him all the settled malice of the murderer; and after he kills the King, the unrelenting irony with which he views the blood upon his sword, is perfectly preserved. It is something astonishing, that when Cibber first brought his alteration of Richard the Third, in which he has shewn great abilities as a tragic writer, on the Stage, this Act was ordered by the licenser to be left out, lest it should remind people of drawing a comparison between the justly banished

James

James and the unfortunate Henry; which to do, in my opinion, required a large straining of judgment. However it has been for many years restored.

It is to be observed of this character, that wherever he speaks of his own imperfections, he shews himself galled and uneasy; and in one particular passage his drawing a parallel between himself and the rest of human kind, to all whom he finds himself unequal, determines him in villainy. *Then I am like no brother, &c.* Garrick in all these places shews by his acting the cross-grained splenetic turn of Richard the Third; he shews you how the survey hurts him: whereas I have seen some people here smile upon themselves, as if well pleased with their own appearance, in which that they were wrong, the performance of this masterly Actor confirms. In his courtship to Lady Anne, the dissimulation is so strong, that we are almost induced to think it real, and to wonder how such deformity could succeed with so much beauty. When Mr. Barry appeared in this character, for which I am not the only person that imagined him unfit, he was thought happy in this Scene; in which, however,

however, all his abilities could not ſet him on a level with this darling of nature; whoſe tone of voice is happily inſinuating, his manner perfectly engaging. Perhaps his exquiſite judgment is ſhewn no where to more advantage, than in the diſtinction he makes between the real and affected character of Richard the Third, particularly in that Scene of the Third Act, wherein, as has been before-concerted, Buckingham, with the Mayor and Aldermen, perſuade him to accept the crown. Let his demeanor be obſerved in each of theſe ſpeeches, and the truth of this obſervation will be admitted.

When Buckingham leaves him in a paſſion, diſguſted at his refuſing the crown, Richard deſires the Mayor to

Call him again----
You will enforce me to a world of cares:
I am not made of ſtone,
But penetrable to your kind entreaties.

What fire lights up his eye, what ſatisfaction glows in his countenance, when he thus expreſſes himſelf!

Why now my golden dream is out;
Ambition, like an early friend, throws back

My

My curtains with an eager hand, o'erjoy'd
To tell me what I dreamt is true---a crown, &c.

Amidſt all the diſcouraging tydings, which he receives in the latter end of the fourth Act; amidſt all the buſtle of repeated diſappointment, he maintains the intrepidity and fire of the character in a manner which none but himſelf can ſuſtain.

There is a fine contraſt in the tenth Scene of the laſt Act, between the calm ſoliloquy ſpoken by Richard before he retires to his couch, and the horror with which he ſtarts up and comes forward, after the ghoſts have uttered their predictions, and retired, which Garrick never fails to illuſtrate. I do not recollect any ſituation in Tragedy in which he appears to more advantage than that in which he riſes and graſps his ſword before quite awake; nor could any thing afford a finer ſubject to a maſterly painter than his manner of receiving Cateſby. Mr. Hogarth, to whoſe comic powers I pay the utmoſt deference, has given us one repreſentation of this in an engraved print, which is very common, but it does not do all that honor to this great painter which I could wiſh; for the figure taken

taken all together is not only much larger in proportion than the figure of Garrick, but one of the legs is projected much beyond its natural length: nor is this criticism of such a nature as that of an eminent scholar, who falsely accused Hogarth of introducing a cat playing with a mouse in his Paul preaching at Athens, which was never thought of. Had it been so, a ludicrous light must have been necessarily thrown over the picture. The gentleman, poorly indeed, excuses himself for this mistake by begging pardon, and saying, he had been told so. The case with us is different. We have just examined the print, which is well executed, and thence deduce our observation, which we shall conclude, with assuring Hogarth, that in our opinion he can hit upon no subject that will give a finer opportunity of displaying his genius than this, which all people of taste would be obliged to him for retouching, and giving a just representation of Garrick in this circumstance, and a picture equal to himself.

The terror which Garrick expresses in the scene in hand, upon the coming in of Catesby; and his recovering from that fright by degrees till

till he affumes the former ſpirit and intrepidity of the character, is a ſtill ſtronger proof of his genius; and the paſſions that one would imagine ſuch a character would feel when dying, are repreſented in a manner peculiar to the feelings of a Garrick. We have deſcribed him in two characters, thoſe of an honeſt, well-meaning, ill-uſed old man, and that of a compound of villany, void of all human affections. Let us now proceed to examine him in ſome parts of a lover, on which we ſhall ſlightly touch.

CHAP. II.

Of Garrick'*s different Excellencies.*

VENICE Preſerved is one of thoſe few Plays which will always ſpeak to the heart of the ſpectator, and never more ſo than when Mr. Garrick appears as Jaffeir. No man but he who has ſeen can ever conceive the additional beauties this ſoliloquy receives from his ſpeaking:

I've now not fifty ducats in the world;
Yet ſtill I am in love, and pleas'd with ruin.
Oh Belvidera! Oh! ſhe is my wife!
And we will bear our wayward fate together,
And ne'er know comfort more.

The different paſſions which here agitate the ſoul of Jaffeir are plainly to be traced in the countenance of Garrick; deſpair and dejection are ſo viſible in his face, that every benevolent heart pants to relieve him, and pronounces

Oh Belvidera! Oh, ſhe is my wife!

in a manner ſo pathetic, and ſo ſtrongly affecting, that to hear him, and at the ſame time to ſtop the burſting tear, is impoſſible. This Scene is wrought up with wonderful art by the poet; and as far as Garrick's performance relates to it, he ſeems to partake of equal ſpirit.

It is here that Pierre, with great ſubtilty, endeavours to rouze the languid ſpirit of Jaffeir, to animate him to revenge, by aſſuring him a reformation of the evils under which he laboured might, with reſolution, be eaſily compaſſed. He then touches upon the diſtreſſes of his wife in a manner ſo artful, that he firſt melts him into tears, and then rouzes him to vengeance at reminding him of the hardſhips and indignities under which a wife, on whom he doated, had labored. The wife is then admirably introduced; and Mr. Garrick's ex-

preſſion of all the ſoft ſenſations which ſuch an incident would naturally excite, is equally admirable.

In the ſecond Act Garrick takes the purſe offered him by Pierre with all the ſeeming horror and deteſtation which a man of honor muſt naturally feel at ſuch an offer; and it is now that I regret the uſe that is made of it, touched with Garrick's feelings, rather than thoſe of Jaffeir.

In the concluſion of this Act, where Jaffeir delivers his wife up, as a pledge of his fidelity, to the care of Renault, Garrick's behaviour, while ſhe ſpeaks this ſpeech,

If I am falſe, accuſe me; but if true,
Don't, prithee don't, in poverty forſake me;
But pity the ſad heart that's torn with panting---
Yet hear me---yet recal me----

ſo fully diſplays love and deſpair ſtruggling in his ſoul, that tho' we are angry with Jaffeir for his ungenerous ſeverity to his wife, we are obliged to pity ſufferings ſo finely repreſented. In that part of the fourth Act, where Belvidera endeavours to work upon him, ſo as to

make him diſcover the conſpiracy to the Senate, and procure the arreſt of his new brethren, our great Actor's looks and performance are ſo admirably adapted, that from them only, were we ſtrangers to the language, we might judge of her power over him, and in what manner he was impreſſed by her arguments: and he is here ſo very fine, that he can never fail to fill the eye with tears, and make every heart ſympathize with the pangs which ſwell the heart of Jaffeir, whom we are now almoſt willing to excuſe for his perfidy; for we cannot but pity him for being liable to ſuch temptation as can flow from the tongue of a Cibber, whoſe mellifluous tones are not leſs perſuaſive than his, than which nothing can be more pleaſing or melodious.

In a few words, thro' the whole character of Jaffeir he gives us an exquiſite picture of conjugal love and friendſhip: we never hear him mention his dear Belvidera, but in accents that are beautifully tender. The afflictions that he ſuffers for her ſeem none of them diſſembled; neither do I know any character where the miſeries of a fond huſband, a miſguided friend, and a weak man, are ſo

ſtrongly

ſtrongly drawn as by Otway in this Play, and by Garrick in his acting in it.

When we review the merits of this Play, and the Orphan, we cannot but regret, that we ſee no more of Otway's dramatic Performances; for his choice of ſubject is always judicious, his language tender, and his incidents ſtriking. It is well known, that by his want of œconomy he was often obliged to apply to his friends for ſupport; and he was ſo much in debt at the time of Venice Preſerved being performed, that all the profits of it would not have ſilenced the clamours of his creditors, had not the Ducheſs of Portſmouth, to whom he dedicated it, made him a preſent of twenty guineas for the compliment. His conſtant friend, Mr. Betterton, and ſome others, made him up the like ſum, and deſired him to retire to Hampſhire, as being a cheap country, and to write another Tragedy, which he promiſed to bring on the Stage the next ſeaſon. Otway ſeemingly complied, left his lodgings, and retired to the country, as they thought: his friends were very uneaſy at not hearing from him for ſome time, when in about three months they were informed, that

he had been ſeen in the outſkirts of the town in a very mean garb. This they ſoon found to be true, on the receipt of ſome petitionary letters for a further ſupply, which they were too much diſpleaſed with him to anſwer. He had now no reſource left but to apply to Mrs. Behn for the loan of five pounds, to enable him, as he termed it, to finiſh his play, which ſhe generouſly advanced; but how agreeably was ſhe ſurpriſed with the ſtyle and pathetical diſtreſs of four Acts of it almoſt finiſhed, which he ſhewed her! In her judgment it was ſuperior to any thing he had before written. The ſtory was that of Iphigenia: ſhe adviſed him to ſhew it to Mr. Betterton, adding, that ſhe was ſure it would compromiſe all differences. This his modeſty declined, till he had completed the whole. It is probable that at this time he went to his lodgings on Tower-hill. However, Mrs. Behn acquainted Mr. Betterton with this interview, who immediately made all poſſible enquiry after him, till about a month afterwards he was informed of his death on Tower-hill. He ſoon enquired out his lodging, which he found to be with a poor woman in one of the blind alleys there, where he was further informed, that on the night he died,

died, a man, who used to visit him, had come into his room and taken away all his papers, with some few books he had remaining. Mr. Betterton did not neglect to make the strictest search after this person, but could never learn who he was that had deprived the world of this invaluable treasure. That Otway did leave a Play is very certain; and it is as certain, that the piece called Heroic Friendship, which was laid to his charge by a certain publisher, had no mark of his genius. This ornament to the Drama received the first rudiments of education at Winchester school, removed thence as a commoner to Christ Church, Oxon; a proof of his being a man of family. His character for learning was not greater at College than it was afterwards for courage in the army, he being some time an ensign. He was handsome and companionable; an idler and a sot; and he kept it up to the last; for one of his last compositions was a song in praise of punch, tho' at that time he wanted victuals. He left college, with a company of players, at a public Act in 1674. Elk. Settle left Queen's College at the same time, and they spouted together.

There is not any character in Tragedy so seldom hit off by the Actor as Macbeth, perhaps there are few more difficult; and in the hands of Garrick it acquires an inconceivable ease. It is curious to observe in him the progress of guilt from the intention to the act. How his ambition kindles at the distant prospect of a crown, when the witches prophecy! and with what reluctance he yields, upon the diabolical persuasions of his wife, to the perpetration of the murder! How finely does he shew his resolution staggered, upon the supposed view of the air-drawn dagger, until he is rouzed to action by the signal, viz. the ringing of the closet bell!

It is impossible for description to convey an adequate idea of the horror of his looks, when he returns from having murdered Duncan with the bloody daggers, and hands stained in gore. How does his voice chill the blood when he tells you, "I've done the deed!" and then looking on his hands, "this is a sorry sight!" How expressive is his manner and countenance during Lenox's knocking at the door, of the anguish and confusion that possess him; and his answer, "'twas a rough night,"

night," ſhews as much ſelf-condemnation, as much fear of diſcovery, as much endeavour to conquer inquietude and aſſume eaſe, as ever was infuſed into, or intended for, the character. What force, what uncontroulable ſpirit does he diſcover in his diſtreſſes, when he cries out,

They have tied me to a ſtake---I cannot fly;
But bear-like I muſt fight my courſe.

In ſhort, he alone, methinks, performs the character.

As it is uſual, with Shakeſpear particularly, in every place to ſeize the ſtrongeſt likeneſſes that nature can furniſh, to diverſify every paſſion with exact colouring and propriety, and accurately to mark the different ſituations and predominant qualities of characters, ſo is it with Mr. Garrick to transfuſe them thro' his whole performance: he delineates them ſo that they are ſeen by every eye; nor is this virtue any where more plainly ſhewn than in Hamlet. The author has drawn this prince of a reſerved cautious turn, ariſing from a melancholy ſtamped on him by his father's untimely death, and ſome conſequent misfortunes. The

paſſions

paſſions whereby he is actuated do not, except in a few places, riſe to any height; and to diſtinguiſh his feigned madneſs from his real provocation, is a maſter-piece which he hits off admirably. His manner of receiving his father's ghoſt on its firſt entrance has a fine mixture of aſtoniſhment, deference, and reſolution; and the recollection and reverence which Garrick preſerves in ſpeaking,

Go on, I'll follow thee,

as well as all thro' the next Scene, are by him better kept up than by any other Actor I have ſeen in this character. In the Cloſet Scene with his mother, where Hamlet ſays, "he will ſpeak daggers to her, but uſe none," he preſerves a proper air of filial affection amidſt the moſt bitter reproaches, until it gives way to the awe and ſurprize that muſt naturally ariſe from the re-appearance of the ghoſt, who

Comes to whet his almoſt blunted purpoſe.

His real tenderneſs for Ophelia, and his ineffectual endeavours to hide it, are diſtinctions which he is as nice in conveying as the poet was in drawing. All thro' the character of Romeo I think him at leaſt equal to any one who ever performed; and where other paſ-

ſions

ſions beſides love are to be diſplayed, he is vaſtly ſuperior. This is evinced particularly in the laſt act; his tranſition from the ſettled ſatisfaction of his preſages, to ſilent horror and deſpondency, on receiving the news of Juliet's death; that deſpair which he ever after maintains thro' the character, are as ſtrong proofs as any I know of his judgment and abilities. The attitude into which he throws himſelf, when diſturbed by Paris in the churchyard, is very ſtriking; and which was ſtolen from him by a certain performer, who owed to his inſtruction many, if not moſt of the ſtrokes on which was founded his great reputation in Romeo. In the dying ſcene of this play he is particularly happy; his manner of expreſſing this ſingle line,

Parents have flinty hearts, and children muſt be wretched,

carries with it ſo much of that ſort of frenzy which is proper to Romeo's melancholy ſituation, and it is delivered in a tone ſo affecting, ſo different from any thing we before heard him expreſs, that it makes one's blood run cold; and I dare ſay there is not a perſon that hears this line ſpoken by him, and who can

charge

charge himſelf with any parental neglect, that will not feel remorſe, and ſhudder.

The various lights which he throws on Chamont are a fine illuſtration of an open-hearted generous ſoldier, tender of the honor of his houſe, impetuous, violent, unartful, and liable to ſlight impoſition. All theſe ingredients he diſtinguiſhes properly thro' the Scene of his ſiſter's complaint of Caſtalio's tenderneſs, till the flame burſts out in,

What, throw thee from him, &c.
So may this arm throw him to the earth,
Like a dead dog, deſpiſed.
Lameneſs and leproſy, blindneſs and lunacy,
Shame, pride, poverty, and the name of villain
Light on me, Caſtalio, if I forgive thee.

His paſſion even diſcharges itſelf on the good old Acaſto; and his ſudden tranſition from rage to reſpect, on remembring his obligations, breaks out finely in ſofter tones here;

Ha! Is not that the good old Acaſto?
Can you forgive me, Sir; indeed I've been to blame.

and thro' the whole character he nicely diſtinguiſhes the delicate ſenſe of his own horror,

ror, of resentment excited by the injuries he supposes his sister to have sustained, his tenderness for her, his struggle between gratitude to Acasto and hatred to Castalio, and his love for Serina; all which by turns fill the breast of Chamont.

In the Roman Father he finely paints his anger and concern for the suspected cowardice of his son, which is contrasted by the mixture of joy and surprise of,

Pretended flight! and this succeeded, ha!
Oh glorious boy!

in a manner that fully deserves that applause with which it is always crowned.

Lothario is too often exhibited like a modern buck, whose appetites, as to women and wine, have no bounds; but this is only part of his character: he is moreover a man of noble blood, large fortune, and bears

As great a name as the proud city (Venice) boasts of.

which Mr. Garrick takes care to mark by a spirit and deportment peculiar to nobility.

Thus

Thus have we endeavored to give a ſketch of his vaſt abilities in Tragedy, by pointing out a few places in ſome principal characters in which he is remarkably well: there are others of an inferior nature, ſuch as Luſignan in Zara; the ſick King in the ſecond part of Henry the Fourth; in which he diſplays equal merit; and which make us regret, that we do not oftener ſee him in ſhort parts, wherein the particular paſſion, as in each of theſe, is ſtrongly marked; for let a character be of a nature ever ſo inferior, his playing it muſt render it capital. Nor is it only to Tragedy that the merits of this great Actor are confined; for in a comic caſt he has as much propriety and humour as in a tragic he has ſtrength and expreſſive paſſion; and in whatever light he is conſidered, his genius muſt be allowed univerſal, his performance inimitable. In both, nature commixed is his conſtant guide and ſtudy, and never turns the Actor into the buffoon, by ſtepping beyond his bounds.

The paſſions in Comedy never riſe beyond common life; and his exquiſite judgment is to be admired for not only beſtowing on them all the coloring requiſite, without deviating from

from rectitude, but running thro' each with the most consummate ease. In Archer, for example, he is the footman, the gallant, and the gentleman by turns: his addresses to Cherry are easy and jocular; with Mrs. Sullen he is polite and unaffected, particularly in the Gallery scene, where the gentleman's education ought to shine upon the manners of the footman; and he talks of pictures and mythology. He is perfectly happy in wishing Aimwell joy of his marriage; his changing to resentment and despondency on finding himself disappointed; and his sudden transition to content and satisfaction on finding that his friend is really a lord. All the world speaks of him with admiration in Bays, which, tho' a particular and confined satire, his performance of it is such, that the satire becomes generally striking and pleasing.

The humour of the character is obvious to the judicious; but these are a class of mortals no more to be found always among the Actors than the Audiences. I have seen the delicate sarcasms of it, the refined irony confined by an injudicious performer, with low buffoonery and vile farce; and this as much for want of judgment

ment as to provoke the laugh of the *million*. No body is ignorant, that this was intended originally for a man of quality, one of the wits of easy Charles's reign, I think it was a Howard, but changed by the illustrious author to a sneer upon Dryden, whose very dress was copied by Estcourt. This Play first appeared in 1683, and levelled particularly at Dryden, to revenge the severity of the character of Zimri in Absalom and Achitophel, wherein are these two lines:

He, in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chymist, fidler, statesman, and buffoon.

No great compliment to a Duke of Buckingham, and a bitter pill to a courtier, as being truth.

Cibber, who afterwards played this part with applause, copied the dress of Tom. Durfey. Mr. Garrick's is levelled at no particular person, but a whimsical unfashionable compound, extremely laughable, and still more so, when one compares it with the importance, the consequence, which he affects to maintain. His contempt for Mr. Smith's judgment; his astonishment and uneasiness at the players being

being gone to dinner. Indeed his performance through the whole, is fine ſatire and finiſhed comedy. It is not unlikely that he may have collected many of his maſterly ſtrokes from a few of ſuch unfortunate authors, who, without wit or judgment, are perpetually buzzing about him with productions fraught with wretchedneſs.

It is almoſt impoſſible for us to reconcile to ourſelves, that one and the ſame perſon ſhould vary from the ſprightly Lothario, and the princely Hamlet, to the mean Tobacco-boy; yet in Abel Drugger he is as inimitable as in the other two. The ſtupid confuſion which he ſhews at breaking the urinal, and his ſatisfaction at going out without its being taken notice of, are peculiar to himſelf. The introducing this incident was firſt owing entirely to accident. It happened to old Cibber, who was allowed to play this character well. He, while the other perſonages were employed, rather than ſtand idle, was fiddling about the table of the Alchymiſt; and by way of filling up time, took up the urinal, and held it to the light, when it by chance ſlipping through his fingers, broke to pieces; and he had preſence of mind

to put on an air of diſtreſs happy to the time and the place; it told to admirable purpoſe. He played the part afterwards as uſual; but the audience obliged him to reſtore the accidental addition; and it has been ever ſince retained by every other performer. Abel Drugger is certainly the ſtandard of low comedy; and Mr. Garrick's playing it the ſtandard of acting in this ſpecies of comedy.

How beautifully does he paint the jealouſy of common life in Kitely, in "Every Man in his Humour." The anxiety and fears here natural to the part, and the aukward endeavour at diſguiſing the ruling paſſion, are capital, both in the poet and the player, particularly where the huſband unawares drops it that he has been,

-------pointed at as one
Diſturbed with jealouſy.
Dame Kitely. *Why were you ever jealous?*
Kite. *What?--ha! never! never! ha, ha, ha!*
She ſtabs me home!---Jealous of thee!
No, do not believe it---Speak low, my love.

Garrick's laugh here is, as his wife afterwards expreſſes it, "Seemingly without mirth, conſtrained,

ſtrained, and affected to the utmoſt." His ſuppoſed detection of old Knowell, in an intrigue with his wife, at Cob's houſe, is a ſcene which would make an exceeding good picture. In a few words here, before the juſtice, and, indeed, through the whole part, he ſhews a deep knowledge of the human heart; and it is equal to any acting that ever was ſeen.

Though it is a jealous character, and fundamentally ſimilar to Don Fælix in the Wonder, he threws it into a very different light; and thereby marks out very properly the varieties of the paſſion of jealouſy; but very juſtly diſtinguiſhes the manner of its operating upon the merchant and the nobleman.

There is in Benedict, in Much Ado about Nothing, an agreeable diſplay of wit and humour, which, under his management, gives us a moſt lively picture of the gaiety and ſprightlineſs of the poet's age. Beatrice and he are very good counter parts. The eager ſolicitude of his look, while he is attending to a converſation on himſelf, is perfectly comic; ſo it is in his ſoliloquy, wherein he ſo

gravely reaſons himſelf into a reſolution of falling in love with her, and the ſelf-flattering air he aſſumes on her ſpeech to him, "If I don't pity her, I'm a villain, &c." Let theſe be compared with his ſpirited raillery againſt matrimony, and we ſhall ſee the different beauties of each in their true light.

In Ranger he is particularly happy. This is a ſprightly young templar, carried away by a faſhionable reliſh for the vices and follies of the town; and he has had a ſufficiency of looſe originals from whom to copy, neither has he ſpared them.

There are many other characters beſides theſe juſt cited, wherein he ſhews the greateſt excellencies; and ſeveral more, to which, were he to attempt them, he would do the greateſt juſtice. I have heard one of the beſt judges of the Drama I ever knew, ſay, that if he were to perform Shylock only, it would ſurpaſs all his other characters, to which I might add Caſſius, Fainwel, and Atall. The firſt, by all accounts, has not been done juſtice to ſince the days of Verbruggen; and in the two laſt he could change the voice and deportment ſo as to abſolutely

ſolutely deceive the audience: whereas all that I have ſeen in this character make this change only to conſiſt in the dreſs.

This he could not effect, but for his talents of extending his obſervation to every ſtation, and extracting from every thing that can add to the imitation of nature, or give life to his performance. Nothing can more fully evince the truth of this affirmation than a review of a ſhort part, written by himſelf, as well as acted, with aſtoniſhing accuracy; I ſay aſtoniſhing, for ſuch will it appear to be to thoſe who have at Bath and the Watering-places been converſant with originals of it. This is Lord Chalkeſtone, an old debauchee of quality, who, in ſpite of his being crippled by the gout, and oppreſſed by a complication of diſorders, will not change his profuſe courſe of life, each day of which is ſacrificed to diſſoluteneſs and irregularity: his manner of walking, acting, and ſpeaking it, is to us one of the higheſt entertainments of the theatre we ever enjoyed. Never, do I believe, did an Actor live before Garrick, who had it in his power to raiſe all that is riſible in us, by the moſt maſterly ſtrokes of humour, or of warm-

ing, moving, and affecting us with the moſt natural diſtreſs. Future times will ſcarcely credit the amazing contraſt between his Lear and School Boy, or his Richard and his Fribble: nor can the beſt judges determine whether he is greateſt in the Sock or Buſkin; yet in each they muſt allow him excellent. We ſhall conclude the character of this Æſopian Roſcius with obſerving, that he gives us not reſemblances, but realities; that he does not exhibit, but create; in him we view as actions what we only admire in others as repreſentations. There is in his performance true dignity of expreſſion; his figures, where his ſubject gives him ſcope, are noble beyond imagination; his attitudes are with juſtice appropriated to the ſenſations whereby they are ſuppoſed to be inſpired; and his coloring, to borrow a metaphor from painting, is the higheſt we ever did or ever muſt expect to ſee. With all the ſoftneſs and elegance of his imagery, there is a glow of fire and freedom, that at once ſurpriſes and charms the attentive ſpectator: and I am of opinion that he excels all his predeceſſors, as he does all his cotemporaries in the power of ſhewing the diſtinguiſhing touches that ſeparate paſſion from

paſſion;

paſſion; thence is he able to unite in his performance the greateſt ſpirit and exacteſt truth. If he has his faults, they are like ſpots in the ſun, hid beneath a blaze of majeſty; an effulgence of beauty that aſtoniſhes, while it dims all things liable to cenſure, ſo that they become inperceptible.

CHAP. III.

Of Woodward, Moſſop, *&c.*

IF frequent peals of laughter be a teſt of merit, Mr. Woodward deſervedly enjoys the favour of the town, and maintains it through the variety of comic characters in which he appears. In his deſigning he is ſingular and ſhining, but often incorrect: if he has not eaſe, he has a manner that ſtands in the place of it; and let him be ever ſo deficient, he never diſpleaſes, his performance being happily calculated to catch the eye at firſt ſight, and ſupported by a vivacity, joined to a genteel well-made figure, that never fails to make a proper impreſſion, and biaſs his auditors in his favor. In Socia he is extremely happy; and Bobadil, by which he has acquired a vaſt increaſe of reputation, is a part of his own

creation, and a proof of his genius. The true bully is well displayed in his treading on master Stephen's sword, with, *This a toledo! pish!* and his manner of repeating the speech beginning with,

I would select, &c.

is admirable characteristic, and entirely original: indeed these are epithets which justly belong to him through the whole character. Nor has he less merit in Duretete. His behaviour, when shut up among the women, is truly admirable. I cannot say so much for his Scrub, which is rather too grotesque; and yet, methinks, he might find Scrubs enough in nature from whom to copy: but if he is here a little mistaken, in Tom in the Conscious Lovers, and Lissardo in the Wonder a Woman keeps a Secret, he makes up sufficiently for the defect.

His anxiety in the former of these characters for a master, whom he is supposed to love, being in danger; his endeavouring to prevent the quarrel between him and his friend; and his confusion when he has, in the latter part, been coquetting with the two maids, and is called

called by his maſter, who he is afraid will diſcover him, are fine comic exhibitions, and draughts from nature. I know not a great deal of Woodward in private; but he has often given me pleaſure, vaſt pleaſure in public. He gave Falſtaff much too old an appearance, yet a levity of deportment irreconcileable to fat Jack. He is well in the Buſy Body; the eager curioſity of his look, when he apprehends a ſecret in agitation, and his penitential behaviour when he finds he has made a blunder in the diſcovery of it, are as truly comic as his ridiculous timidity in the laſt act.

The characters of Flaſh in Miſs in her Teens, and the Fine Gentleman in Lethe, he illuſtrates with ſo many different ſtrokes of humour, that it is hard to ſay, whether in the boaſting cowardice of the one, or the affected elegance of the other, he moſt excels. In thoſe of Touchſtone, Braſs, Beau Mizen, Mercutio, and Trapolin, he is unrivalled. The latter in his hands is indeed a moſt laughable character.

Mr.

Mr. Woodward will, I am ſure, forgive me, if I tell him, he forgets to make a proper diſtinction between the different kinds of fops in which he appears. For example: The Foppington, of the Careleſs Huſband, is a man of quality, taſte, and good ſenſe; but carried away by youthful conceit and ſelf-ſufficiency. His manner and deportment ought to differ from that of Witwoud, the clerk, who ſerved his time to honeſt Purple Noſe, the attorney, in Furnival's Inn. Neither is Clody, in the Fop's Fortune, the ſame with Jack Meggot. Yet, upon the whole, I muſt ſay, his acting is ſpirited and vivacious. He has judgment that enables him to daſh, with unexpected ſtrokes of humour, things dull in themſelves; and he often throws over his performance an air of originality that impoſes on the ſpectator, and gives to the performance the appearance of reality.

Mr. Moſſop has been juſtly allowed merit as a Tragedian. He is a good ſcholar; and underſtands his author perfectly well; but he does not meliorate his exhibition. His voice is one of the fineſt in the world, but he ſtrains it to an unaccountable harſhneſs; ſo

that,

that, like a Cremona fiddle in bad hands, it ſends forth ſounds that it was never made to produce. I think he has reformed of this lately, as well as of his aukward action; for I own his left-hand has often given me great uneaſineſs.

Zanga is ſaid to be this gentleman's maſterpiece: there is a gloom, a ſolemnity in it, which he happily ſupports, and a ſpirit of revenge, which he conveys from the beginning to the end; ſo that even Quin's warmeſt admirers have given him the preference. In the ſpeaking of the whole part he is, as indeed in moſt others, nicely emphatical: the fourth act particularly he ſupports with a proper ſpirit of diſſimulation; and all the ſeeming honeſty of the Moor happily intermixes in his manner of telling Alonzo the ſtory of Leonora's meeting with Carlos. His pauſe, when Alonzo falls, before he pronounces theſe lines,

Groan on, and with the ſound refreſh my ſoul;
'Tis thro' his heart, his knees ſmite one another,

is very graceful. The time that he takes is a good comment on the paſſage that expreſſes his feeling the gratification of his enmity, in the over-

overthrow of his conqueror: he uſes a tone that is deep, and not too high, and delivers the ſentence out of Alonzo's hearing. I have ſeen an actor eminent for judgment here hang over his patron, and thunder in his ear with a voice loud enough to have awakened the dead.

Mr. Moſſop is, in the laſt ſcene of this play, very maſterly: his tranſition from low ſervile flattery to a voice expreſſive of ſatisfied revenge, in

Born for your uſe; I live but to oblige you.
Know then---'twas I----

is ſtrikingly marked. But methinks I ſaw him once throw a new light on the ſpeaking of the laſt hemiſtic; he pronounced it in a tone fraught with malice, fully expreſſive of gratified revenge; he clenched both his fiſts, threw himſelf forward, and, with a ghaſtly grin, delivered it full in the teeth of the diſtreſſed Alonzo: in ſhort, he diveſted himſelf of the noble deportment

Of a prince whom kings had followed, and a people lov'd;

and diſplaying nothing but the malice of an

injured ſlave: but though I thought him wrong, the acting was fine, and gave me pleaſure. This happened about two years ſince; I dare ſay Mr. Moſſop's judgment has led him to lay this mode aſide. I am ſure he ought, if he remembers that Zanga is a prince, whoſe perſon has been diſgraced by a vile blow, who had no way of reſtoring himſelf to himſelf but by revenge; that revenge was to him a kingdom, and as ſuch he meant to enjoy it; however, let him ſpeak it as he will, his voice is well calculated to have a fine effect.

Were he to take leſs pains, both in enunciation and action, particularly in Horatio in the Fair Penitent, he would find it turn to account; in the ſcene of adviſing Caliſta, and fighting with Altamont, he ſupports the character well. In Oſmyn, in the Mourning Bride, in the firſt act, wherein he is brought in priſoner, his countenance and comportment ſtrongly indicated the paſſions of his mind; and in his manner of replying to the King, who queſtions him as to the reaſon of his gloomineſs, there was a proper mixture of rage, grief, and contempt for the perſon by whom

whom he was addressed. Though tenderness is not his sort, in the scenes with Almeria, he had a sufficiency; and his confusion on being discovered with her by Zara, was kept up with well-marked propriety.

Had he more weight, and he would have more if he endeavoured at less, he would excel in Pierre; and, indeed, through the whole, he is capital. I except his manner of speaking these lines to Jaffeir, when they are brought face to face before the senate:

These hoary traitors, Jaffeir, call us all villains.
Art thou one, my friend?

Mr. Mossop pronounces those words as if he suspected, that his friend was a traitor, which the whole tenor of the part contradicts; and besides, it is a mode of speaking that throws a blemish on Pierre greater than he ought to be laden with. Let us consider him as a man above suspicion, and we shall compassionate him the more: besides, it is a fine contrast to see an honest unsuspecting friend with arms extended to embrace the man by whom he was betrayed; does it not enhance our regard for the one, our contempt

for the other? In the remainder of this ſcene, however, he has juſtly acquired much reputation. How truly does he look that contempt for all around him, which the ſpeeches imply? How nobly does he refuſe the offers of life which are made him, and reminds Jaffeir (who on his knees implores forgiveneſs, and begs him to live) of his falſehood; of the ſervices he had done him, and the perfidy wherewith he repaid him? Here he ſupports ſo well the ſentiment and ſituation of Pierre, that to hear and not to admire, as well as feel for his misfortunes, and deſpiſe their author at the ſame time, is impoſſible. From the characters I've ſeen him attempt in Comedy, I cannot think he will meet with very great ſucceſs; for he has not as yet acquired that ſprightly *degagée* air, that familiar elocution, which is eſſential to it. Upon the whole, he is a very valuable performer; and from the quick improvement he has already made, we have reaſon to hope, the little blemiſhes which attend him now, will ſoon wear off, and that we ſhall yet ſee him a finiſhed Actor.

If humour, propriety, and a cloſe adherence to nature, render a man valuable in the theatrical

trical world, Mr. Yates claims eminent diſtinction. His Brainworm was no leſs a maſter-piece than Woodward's Bobadil; nay, if we conſider the various powers it required to ſupport differently the ſerving-man, the diſbanded ſoldier, the juſtice's clerk, and the varlet of the city or bailiff, and how he excelled in each, in all, we ſhall perhaps rank him next to Kitely. I never ſaw ſo good a Ben in my life. His Sir Francis Wronghead, his Sir Wilful Witwou'd, and his Lying Valet, are ſtill ſtronger proofs of his abilities. There is not a more uſeful, nor a more pleaſing performer now in Drury-lane than him. His judgment and experience teach him never to overſhoot the mark, but to keep nature always in view. I never thought him ſo wrong as when he invaded the province of another performer of acknowledged talents, who is incomparable. Every body, without being directed thereto, will name Mr. Foote, who is an excellent Comedian, and has uncommon merit in many characters, eſpecially in thoſe of his own writing; to which he gives the higheſt colouring: theſe being copied rather from the oddities of nature, loſe ſeveral of thoſe diverting particularities, which we admire in his performance, when

when attempted by any other. His audiences have been always highly entertained with his performance of Fondlewife, and Sir Paul Pliant: this is a caſt in which he is happy in exerting his judgment, and diſplaying his admirable talents for humor; the latter part is, in his hands, a new creation. With him it appears in a light very different from any thing that I had ever ſeen preſented by any other actor. He renders the ridicule of it ſo ſtriking, without trick or grimace, that he not only commands the applauſe of the judicious, but of the *million*. In the third Act he keeps up finely all the awe in which Sir Paul ſtands of his wife. His admiration of her wit and perſon here, where ſhe compliments Mr. Careleſs, and his ſilent action, as well as his humorous manner of throwing in half lines of rapture and affection, add conſiderably to the ſcene. His performance in the fourth Act of this Play is true Comedy; his reading of the letter is maſterly; and his change of looks from deſpondency to joy, at ſuppoſing lady Pliant's excuſe true, and the whole of what is paſt a contrivance of Careleſs to abuſe him, is eaſy, natural, and ſpirited, and free from any ſtrokes of mimicry: it is nature finely

copied. A Stoic would burst with laughter to see the air of gravity and wisdom which he assumes, when Careless advances to inform him of his proceeding with his lady, and his only saying---*Indeed---Well, Sir---I'll dissemble with him a little*---so strongly indicate Sir Paul's views; his hope of catching Careless in a lye; his subsequent satisfaction at being deceived; and his manner of going off, are just, spirited, in character, and in nature. From considering him in this, and other characters, we must allow, that his talents are not confined to mimicry, as malice would insinuate, nor yet to his own pieces.

Mr. Berry is an Actor who stands well in the characters of Sciolto, Acasto, Old Capulet, King Henry in Richard, and others of this kind, and is much superior to any I have seen. He keeps nature generally in view, in the expressions of paternal fondness, but sometimes does more than she requires, in his excessive grief. He has the art, known but by few on the stage, of diversifying his old men: his Adam in As You Like It, is genuine nature in a low sphere. It is a praise to his judgment that he preserves a proper dignity in the

the grief of King Henry, &c. I have seen him also in Comedy acquit himself to general satisfaction, principally in Boniface, Caliban, and Serjeant Kite in the Recruiting Officer; a character the hint of which was furnished by a serjeant in the regiment to which Farquhar belonged, and with whom he was a great favourite.

His real name was Jones. Once, when he was sent into England to recruit, he fell into company, at Chester, with a brother-serjeant, who informed him, that he had met with pretty good success, having enlisted fourteen recruits for his regiment, in Yorkshire. This information was enough for Jones, who, instead of beating up for volunteers as he had intended, took the first opportunity of insinuating himself into the acquaintance of the fellows whom his brother-serjeant had recruited; and, by his agreeable drollery and humorous songs, became so acceptable to them, that they, one and all, agreed to leave their own serjeant in the lurch, and go over with him to Ireland; which they did. A complaint of this odd kind of robbery was made to the Duke of Ormond, then Lord Lieutenant, who im-

mediately ordered him into cuſtody. Mr. Farquhar, hearing of his diſaſter, applied in his behalf to his Grace, with whom he was very intimate, and gave ſo large a character of his humorous abilities, that he ſoon obtained his enlargement; and ſome time after he had the honour of entertaining his Grace to ſuch good purpoſe, that when he diſmiſſed him, he gave him a handſome purſe, and a promiſe of a commiſſion. The many tricks he had played procured him the nick-name of Kite ever after.

We may ſay, that if Mr. Berry is not the greateſt actor, he is at leaſt a very uſeful one: a character which may alſo ſtand for Mr. Blakes, whoſe induſtry and deſire to pleaſe, joined to his being always perfect, ought to ſtand in the place of talents. He is the beſt mimic of a Frenchman I ever ſaw.

Mr. Palmer's agreeable perſon beſpeaks our approbation almoſt at firſt ſight: his merit in ſeveral parts of Comedy confirms it, particularly in True Wit, Colonel Briton, &c. where he has a good deal of ſpirit, which, with a little more freedom in his manner, may make him

a good

a good Plume, or Mirabel. But I would recommend to him to quit the Buſkin; for though he is a juſt ſpeaker, yet he is apt ſometimes to run into a puerility of tone, which quite enervates his performance: however, his daily improvements encourage us to hope, that he has not reached his utmoſt perfection.

Mr. Holland's firſt appearance was in Oroonoko, in which he gave great hopes of one day proving a valuable member of the theatrical community. He has not diſappointed our expectations. We have beheld him daily improve. He performed Hamlet in a manner that merited the approbation with which he was received. There is great tenderneſs in his Dorilas; and I think he muſt cut a very good figure in a ſerious caſt in Comedy. His figure is agreeable; his features well proportioned, and pleaſingly diſpoſed. Some tones of his voice, which is not ſtrong, remind us of that of Mr. Garrick, which it reſembles; from whence ſome people have maliciouſly affirmed, that he is parrotted in every thing. It is certain, Mr. Garrick's judgment leads him to hint many fine ſtrokes to his performers; and I ſuppoſe Holland has ſufficient good ſenſe to

make a proper use of them among the rest. In the mean time, let it be observed, that this performer has genius; and that, if he had not, Garrick has other use to make of his time than to dedicate it intirely to the forming of one man. Holland, upon the whole, is always perfect; he knows what he is about; he can taste the essence of a part; and though he is not ambitious of appearing in a capital cast, he always fills it to advantage. The story of his being a baker is false.

Mr. Havard's agreeable figure and good understanding always give elegance and propriety to every part he undertakes. In Edgar he hits off the mad part admirably; and under all the appearance of rags and poverty you can see the gentleman. He is very well in Sir Charles Easy, Manly, the Friar in Romeo and Juliet, and generally in all characters of a genteel grave cast: if he fails in any, he is readily excused for the great merit of his private character.

Since those great ornaments of the stage, Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Oldfield were no more, the lovers of the Drama were apprehensive, that

that they ſhould never ſee their equals in tender or majeſtic diſtreſs again; but ſince Mrs. Cibber's appearance, thoſe fears are removed, and all the excellencies of each are revived in her. The great ſenſibility ſhe has derived from nature, her exquiſite art and judgment, directs her to give to every paſſion its full colouring and expreſſiveneſs, even beyond our idea. Would ſhe charm us into the moſt affecting diſtreſs, with the woes of a Juliet, or Belvidera, then

Her looks-----
Draw audience and attention ſtill as night,
Or ſummer's noon-tide air. MILTON.

'till our hearts have catched the pleaſing infection, and our eyes confeſs it in tears.

Were ſhe to confine herſelf barely to ſuch tender ſcenes as theſe, we could not even then ſufficiently admire her; but how are we ſurpriſed at the wild exertion of her powers in the ſudden tranſitions ſhe makes from love and grief to the extremities of rage and deſpair! and how different is her Juliet from her Alicia! and yet how juſtly does ſhe feel in both, without exceeding the bounds of nature, or infringing upon female delicacy in either?

The musically plaintive tone of her voice gives a surprising softness to her love-characters; and her great skill in the passions never fails to direct her in the application of that, and her commanding features to be every way expressive of the poet's idea.

A short sketch of a few of her characters may give us some faint idea of her excellence.

In her Juliet we are charmed with all the innocence of youth and beauty, influenced by love. How simple, yet how tender and natural, is her conversation with Romeo in the garden scene!

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
Else wou'd a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak to night.
Fain wou'd I dwell on form; fain, fain deny
What I have spoke---but farewel, compliment;
Dost thou love me?---&c.

How different is this fond, this joyous scene from that wherein she hesitates to take the poison, anticipating in imagination the terrors of the Charnel-House, which yet her love overcomes.

Romeo, I come---This do I drink to thee.

The

The agonies of grief and despair, mingled with love, which she shews in the last act, rise beyond description; and she only is Shakespear's Juliet.

The slightest materials in the hands of an artist, receive new beauty and lustre. Thus, when Ophelia says,

I wou'd give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my poor father died;

Mrs. Cibber utters it with such sweet simplicity, and artless grief, as never fails of drawing tears from her audience.

In Belvidera she gives fresh strength to this most amiable picture of conjugal affection:

Oh, I will love thee, even in madness love thee:
Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart
Shou'd 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.

Her distresses in parting with Jaffeir are most natural and affectingly set forth. How melancholy and plaintive is her voice in these few words!

Bequeath me something---Not one kiss at parting!
Oh my poor heart, when wilt thou break!

That

That heart must be insensible indeed which is not affected with her maternal tenderness in Andromache:

------My swoln heart is full---
I have a thousand farewels for my son,
But tears break in---and interrupt my speech, &c.

What variety and force of expression are in her Alicia. In this character she shews her unlimited genius, and gives the different passions their proper force. Rage and scorn are painted by her in the strongest light in the first scene of the second act with Hastings.

Dost thou in scorn
Preach patience to my rage? &c.

In the last scene of the fourth, act how beautiful is her transition from rage to grief!

Oh yet before I go for ever from thee,
Turn thee in gentleness and pity to me, &c.

When she finds the fatal effects her jealousy produced, she rises into all the extremities of rage, grief, and despair, which terminate in madness. The last scene is allowed to be her master-piece. Her face, her looks, every attitude, are strongly expressive of her inward conflicts.

With

With what supreme contempt does she spurn away Jane Shore in these words!

And dost thou come to me for bread?
I know thee not---Go---hunt for it abroad.

How strongly afterwards does she paint her own wretchedness to her!

I'll give thee misery, for here she dwells:
This is her house where the sun never dawns,

till the dismal reflection quite overwhelms her.

'Tis fall'n! 'tis here! I feel it on my brain.

Then what a haggard wildness usurps her looks; they are armed with all the symptoms of madness, rage, and despair. One would think that the *horrid, headless trunk* of Hastings was actually skimming before her.

These few examples may give us an idea of her great excellence in many other characters in Tragedy, such as Constance, Monimia, Sigismunda, Calista, and Isabella in the Fatal Marriage, in the distresses of which she is indeed incomparable.

To say no more, she has so much the air of an original in her performance, that all who

who appear in the ſame characters after her, ſeem but faint and languid copies.

Mrs. Pritchard is an Actreſs of extenſive abilities, both in Tragedy and Comedy. She fills the ſtage well, her appearance is commanding, and her middle voice clear, intelligible, and melodious. It is not ſo well when ſhe endeavours to raiſe to the expreſſion of rage or horror; nor yet in pity or tenderneſs do we feel it efficacious; yet her manner and meaning ſufficiently compenſate for this defect. No woman ſupports better the dignity of Tragedy. I never obſerved her to deſcend into the familiar in the Queens of Hamlet or Merope; in the latter ſhe preſerves ſuch a majeſty of grief and maternal diſtreſs for her ſon Eumenes, as always highly affects and pleaſes. Her Hermione is a maſter-piece in its kind. It would be difficult to ſay, what variety and juſtneſs ſhe obſerves in the expreſſion and tranſition of every paſſion in this character; and to determine in which ſhe is moſt excellent would be a very hard taſk.

With what a commanding mien does ſhe appear; and at the ſame time how variouſly

and juſtly does ſhe adapt every tone and motion to each paſſion, when ſhe pronounces the following ſpeech!

That love, that conſtancy, ſo ill requited,
Upbraids me to myſelf: I bluſh to think
How I have uſed him, and wou'd ſhun his preſence.
What will be my confuſion when he ſees me,
Neglected and forſaken like himſelf?
Will he not ſay, Is this the ſcornful maid,
The proud Hermione, that tyrannized
In Sparta's court, and triumph'd in her charms?
Her inſolence at laſt is well repaid---
I cannot bear the thought.

Her eyes ſparkle with all the fire of keen reſentment and ſlighted love. When Phyrrhus rejects her, ſhe ſays,

Be gone! the prieſt expects you at the altar---
But, tyrant, have a care I come not thither.

Maternal diſtreſs was never more finely or truly painted than by her in the Queen's parting with her children in the fourth act of Richard the Third. How pathetically does ſhe mourn over them!

Oh my poor children! Oh distracting thought!
I dare not bid them (as I should) farewel;
And then to part in silence stabs my soul.

It would be endless to enumerate the variety of characters in which she has succeeded in Comedy: her talents in it are general. In Beatrice, Clarinda, and all characters of that cast, the engaging archness and pleasantry of her aspect, fully realizes the poet's idea, and leaves us nothing more to wish for; and we even forget her size, which is not quite proper for a coquet. In a word, every beauty she displays is the result of an uncommon genius, improved with the utmost art.

The rapid progress which Miss Macklin has made since her first appearance is a proof both of her genius and industry. Her talents seem turned for Comedy; though I have seen her in some scenes of Tragedy wherein she has been capitally great, particularly Almeria.

In some scenes of Lady Townly she has shewn that courtly elegance which has been long wanting on our Stage. She has a genteel figure and significant countenance, with such a grace in her deportment as must always

make

make her appear to the greateſt advantage in genteel Comedy. In Silvia, Jacintha, and characters which require her appearance in men's cloaths, ſhe has a freedom and eaſe much ſuperior to any performer now on the Stage; and if her improvement continues, we may expect in a ſhort time to ſee her one of the moſt finiſhed performers on the Stage.

Miſs Pritchard is rather low, but her figure is extremely elegant: there is great ſoftneſs, good ſenſe, and underſtanding diſplayed in her Juliet; and I have ſeen her perform the dying Scene as well as I ever deſire to ſee it. If her mother is fine in Lady Macbeth's ſleep, ſo is this young lady in the tomb-ſcene of Romeo: if her mother excels in Lady Touchwood, ſo does ſhe in Lady Betty Modiſh; and I know nobody on the Stage that has ſo much of the deportment about her of the woman of quality.

I believe that of all Actreſſes who have appeared in the comic vein, Mrs. Clive's ſuperior talents have always been pre-eminent. Notwithſtanding the laviſh encomiums which have been beſtowed on the late Mrs. Bicknell and Mrs. Mountfort; yet thoſe who recollect them,

and have compared the merits of each with those of Mrs. Clive, are unanimouſly agreed in giving her the preference; and it is allowed, that all the beauties which they poſſeſſed are in her revived and improved.

Her talents are wholly of a humorous turn. She knows it, and is right in not attempting the ſerious in Comedy, nor the ſublime in Tragedy, as her performance in that caſe would certainly be attended with a ludicrous diſadvantage. She is excellent in the fooliſh ſimplicity of Mrs. Cadwallader, in the pertneſs of Phillis, and parts of that caſt: ſhe is happy in the Fine Lady in Lethe. Her figure and her years are indeed againſt her in Miſs Prue and Hoyden; yet her performance is juſt and pleaſing even in theſe, as in every thing ſhe undertakes to perform.

She has a natural melody in her voice; and her manner of ſinging ballads is accompanied with a humour peculiar to herſelf. Mrs. Clive is not only the moſt uſeful, but the moſt entertaining actreſs on the Stage: nay, if we conſider her variety of powers, and her exertion of them, I fancy we may ſafely allow her to be the Garrick of the ladies.

Mrs.

Mrs. Davis's agreeable figure and graceful deportment command our attention to every part ſhe aſſumes. She has merit in many characters, chiefly in Iſabella in the Wonder, Lady Eaſy, Fair Quaker, &c. and in the Lady in Comus deſerves the next place to Mrs. Cibber.

As we have not obſerved any order in ſpeaking of different performers, but mentioned them juſt as they occurred, we hope the ladies will not fall out about their places, nor the gentlemen, who may perchance be placed at the lower end of the table, quarrel with us for indignity. After this admonition we will venture to ſay, that we have ſeen Miſs Haughton with great pleaſure in ſome parts of Mrs. Cibber's caſt. She has ſtrong feeling; but the weakneſs of her voice prevents her from making ſo good an impreſſion as her judgment enforces. She has life and ſpirit in comedy; and we never ſee her without ſatiſfaction.

Miſs Minors (now Mrs. Walker) is poſſeſſed of an infinite fund of humour, which ſhe very happily infuſes into her parts. In the

Hoydens and pert chamber-maids she shews to great advantage; and there is no woman that can stand with a tithe of her merit, in the cast, and on the same stage, with Mrs. Clive. We must give her the preference, though Mrs. Green be in the same walk, to whom we, at the same time, grant great merit.

There are many characters which Mr. Davis fills to vast advantage. His King in Hamlet manifests great judgment; and his performance of Claudio, in Much Ado about Nothing, shews a great sensibility, a good understanding, and a genius that will daily improve.

Instinct sets Mr. Vernon right in Dramatic exhibitions; for he has certainly judgment in singing. In acting he shews a proper assurance, and he seems ignorant of it. I have seen him, young as he is, stand well in some parts of Mr. Woodward's cast.

Mr. Bransby had liked to have been overlooked in the crowd, which is a little odd, as he is no very trifling object: indeed, neither his person, nor his talents are diminutive. He fills

fills up a grave, serious cast on the Stage with great decency; and the roughness of Downright, in Every Man in his Humour, and of honest old Kent, in King Lear, sit on him with ease.

Mr. Burton is also in the serious cast of elderly men in Comedy; and as he is a respectable citizen-like figure, and no stranger to his author's meaning, he never displeases. I saw him once play Sir Giles Over-reach with a great deal of satisfaction: nor is his Burleigh without merit.

I know not any Actor who has greater requisites for the Stage than Mr. Barry. He is tall, and well made; neither too fat nor too lean: his whole person, taken together, is noble and commanding; and it would, at all times, be extremely graceful, were he not inclined to stoop. His features are regular, handsome, and expressive; his natural countenance open, placid, and benevolent; but easily formed to the indications of haughtiness and contempt: not the young favorite of the mother of beauty could assume an air of greater tenderness, or softer sensibility, than he

does in Caſtalio, which had ſunk for many years under the hands of ignorance and incapacity into obſcurity. His voice is finely calculated to aid the appearance: it has melody, depth, and ſtrength; but he does not always diſplay it to advantage. There is a fine break of grief in it, which, if I do not miſtake, he firſt introduced in the laſt Act of Eſſex; where, when the officers are preſſing his departure, he points to his wife lying on the ground, with

Oh! look there!

The manner of this expreſſion was ſo affecting, that the whole houſe burſt into tears. He ſaw the effect, and has uſed the cauſe rather too often improperly. He again often runs out to a high treble that quarrels with the ear, and gives us room to ſuſpect, that he is trying the force of his voice, inſtead of being warmed with the neceſſary paſſion. A performer of his rank and conſequence ought to avoid giving any body room to arraign his judgment: for the future, perhaps, he will not leave ſuch an opening to criticiſm.

After all, wherever love, grief, tenderneſs, or pity, are the ruling paſſions of a character, there Barry is ſure to excel.

Othello

Othello is his maſter-piece; and his acting of it cannot be tranſcended. He addreſſes the aſſembled ſenate with an account of the whole proceſs of his wooing better than any man I ever ſaw. In the two ſcenes in the third and fourth Act, where Iago works upon his credulity, ſo as to inflame him to the higheſt pitch of jealouſy, his perturbations are natural and noble. His perplexity and anger in

Villain! be ſure you prove my love a whore.
Be ſure of it---&c.

are beautifully repreſented; and his attitude, when kneeling by the ſide of Iago, he vows vengeance againſt his unhappy wife, is truly graceful.

Here he ſhews us, that he has properly conſidered the paſſion of anger, which in man never breaks out in loud words, but is kept in under an interrupted voice; and diſcloſes its utmoſt fury rather in action. On the other hand, the anger of a woman is loud, ſhrill, and frantic, having little or no ſtrength, but what is in her tongue; and this Mrs. Hamilton appears well acquainted with, in her performance of Emilia in this Play.

Marc Anthony, in All for Love, is a character which he supports with elegance and propriety. It is impossible to see him stretched on the ground, in the first Act, overwhelmed with misfortunes, without entering into all his grief; nor does he forget to seize the great room a performer has to shine in the third Act of this Play. No body can attend without sympathetic feeling to Anthony's dispute with himself, whether to give way to love, or fatherly affection; and in his countenance the inward tumult and contention is finely marked.

In the Humorous Lieutenant, he performs Demetrius, a young prince possessed of many virtues, but actuated by very strong passions. There is a tincture of romance in it, but it is not bad; and in his hands it loses no part of its merit. In all the Scenes with Celia, whether representing tenderness, jealousy, or despondence, he is just and pleasing. Not so much can be said for his Macbeth. There is a character in the same Tragedy to which he is much better adapted. How delightful would the plaintive notes of his voice sound in Macduff's bewailing the loss of his children. There is a stern, murderous savageness in the first that

that becomes him not near so well as would the tenderness and affection of the last, in which Wilkes was always received with great applause; and is complimented by the Tatler, Numb. 68. Garrick exhibits this Play as it was written. Barry performs it with Betterton's alterations, which I cannot think any ornament to the piece. They put us in mind of German money, wherein we find copper and silver intermixed. Perhaps Shakespear has no where left us finer writing than in this Play; the speaking and acting of which is as hard as the writing is great. I cannot say I ever saw the character played all through equal to what I conceive of it. Mr. Barry has many beauties in it; on which neither my leisure nor space permit me to descant. I shall, however, delay a little here to remark to him, that I think him wrong in his manner of stopping this speech:

To-morrow, to-morrow, &c.

In this place, Macbeth, among other perplexities, receives the news of his wife's death, and cries out,

She should have died hereafter---
There had been time for such a word to-morrow--

To-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creep in a ſlow and ſtealing pace along, &c.

Macbeth's ſituation is at this time ſo very critical, that he has not leiſure to indulge private grief. Hence he is led to obſerve, that his wife's death had better happened at any other time than now, when his circumſtances are ſo very perplexed; and which have now reached ſuch a point, that they muſt, in the courſe of things, ſuſtain ſome conſiderable change even by *to-morrow*; that this change he is perſuaded will be for his advantage, through a reliance on the equivocal and deluſive promiſes of the witches. His mentioning the word, *Morrow*, leads him into a chain of reflections upon its meaning and conſequences, which are otherwiſe abruptly, nay, abſurdly, introduced: and this is the caſe in Barry's way of replying to the account of his wife's death, which he delivers thus:

She ſhould have died hereafter---
There had been time for ſuch a word,
To-morrow, &c.

But he makes up for this miſtake, if it may be called one, in that ſcene wherein he ſays,

Is that a dagger which I ſee before me?

in

in which he is extremely happy, as well as in receiving the ghoſt of Banquo, and all thro' the laſt Act.

He is certainly fine in the part of Alexander; the manner in which he diſpoſes himſelf, his various attitudes in the laſt Act, and particularly in the laſt ſcene, have a charming effect; and one is wrought up almoſt to imagine, that Darius approaches in his chariot, drawn by milk-white ſteeds; and that Alexander is going to lead the charge againſt him. Yet this Play is ſpoiled in the altering, ſo miſerably mangled, that were Nat Lee to riſe from the church-yard of St. Clement's, where he lies buried (next to the tomb of William Pattiſon) he would run mad again; for poor Nat was as mad as his own Alexander. Miſfortunes and drink were the occaſion: he was under the regimen of a milk-diet for the laſt week of his life; but getting one evening out of his phyſician's reach, he drank ſo hard, that he dropped down in the ſtreet, and was run over by a coach. His body was laid in a bulk near Trunkit's, the perfumer's at Temple-bar, till it was owned. He was a clergyman's ſon; his education was liberal; he was for ſome

time

time on the Stage, where he cut but a poor figure; he had an open countenance, and a fine head of hair, which, when he missed in his lucid intervals, he often regretted it, having been necessary to shave him in his madness. He was modest and silent: his works speak his genius. Barry has done much justice to Varanes and Alexander: he is so happily formed to express that feeling of tenderness, that sensibility that runs through all Lee's Plays, and are the characteristicks of his genius, that the mentioning one puts me in mind of the other. I am not singular in saying, that since Wilkes's days there never was so fine a lover upon the Stage; and this is a cast, in which were Barry to confine himself he would remain always unrivalled. I shall mention him in one character, in which he almost equals Verbruggen. Nobody, acquainted with the history of the British Stage, need be told, that I mean Bajazet. It was there that Verbruggen, whose eye had an infinity of fire, and who had great command of face, acquired vast reputation. There was something so astonishing in his silent expression of the rage, pride, and impatience of Bajazet, when in chains, so intimidating, that his only putting on the same

look,

look, when one day he was in danger of being arrested under the piazzas, the bailiff was so frightened, that he dropped the writ, and ran away, as if a mob had been at his heels; at least Verbruggen told this story in Will's coffee-house, and said, that his Bajazet-look had killed a bailiff, and secured him his liberty. There are performers whom I have seen play this character; nay, and heard others praise, whose only merit consisted in growling, frowning, and rattling of chains. But Barry, through the whole, preserves a proper deportment; his dignity finely marks the character; and is happily intermixed with that fierceness, contempt, sulleness, and savage temper, that should swell the bosom of this intractable monarch. There are few characters but what sit easy upon Barry; there is nothing labored in his deportment; and he often snatches from nature graces that cannot be too much admired.

Mr. Ryan has been long, and deservedly, a favourite of the town; but *being now sunk into the vale of years*, claims indulgence as much as he formerly did applause. From his long acquaintance on the Stage, he has acquired an ease

eaſe and freedom equal to any performer I can ever remember. In ſome parts of Iago, he has great merit; and in Mr. Ford is very excellent: but I wiſh he would reſign Capt. Plume, Myrtle, Marcus, Archer, &c. and other characters of that kind, which require the fire of youth to execute.

Mr. Roſs is a good figure, and has an elegance on the Stage which muſt recommend him in genteel Comedy, in which caſt he has lately given ſtrong proofs of his genius, eſpecially in Sir Charles Eaſy, Conſtant, Frankly, and Dorimant. His Bevil is ſuperior to any I have ſeen in that character; and I believe comes nearer the author's intention. He has ſucceeded in ſome characters in Tragedy, eſpecially the Lovers; but his fort is genteel Comedy, in which he is equal to any Performer on the Stage.

Mr. Shuter's performance in the comic way is nearer to nature than moſt of the Comedians on our Stage. His chief excellence lies in old men. The ſetneſs and riſible turn of his features diffuſe a peculiar humour thro' all the parts he plays in low Comedy. He has

a

a fine vacancy of look, an inexpreſſible and inimitable ſimplicity in Maſter Stephen, which is finely contraſted by the bluſtering air of Bobadil. His Scrub has nothing forced in it: he makes every line of it tell, by his having ſtrictly ſtudied nature; and he is obliged to nothing of mimicry, but to real merit for the applauſe he gains in it. I would rather ſee him in the Puritan, in the Duke and no Duke, than in Trappolin. There is a part of the ſame nature in the Alchymiſt, in which I have ſeen him with great pleaſure; the formality, the hypocriſy, and ſelf-intereſtedneſs of the part, he preſerves with all proper force, and is exceedingly juſt, and exceedingly laughable. His Launcelot, Cimberton, and Young Clincher, are equal to our warmeſt wiſhes. He is but young Falſtaff; yet I think he plays it better than any man now on the Stage. However, in the firſt part of Henry the Fourth, I would rather ſee him play Francis; and his genius would make of Juſtice Shallow in the ſecond part almoſt as much as old Cibber, whom nobody has yet come near in that character. Though he is far from being a bad Ben, in Love for Love, yet I own I prefer his Foreſight. Nature has done a great deal for this

Actor; education very little; yet the goodness of his head is such, that he is daily advancing towards perfection, and doubt not of seeing him one day equally esteemed with the celebrated Pinkethman.

Mr. Sparks is an Actor of merit, and shews the strength of his judgment in chusing Acasto, Sciolto, and parts of that cast in Tragedy, which are well adapted to his years and manner. He stands well in Manly, in the Provoked Husband; and in the part of the Old Batchelor. He requires something of agitated passion in Tragedy, and of importance in Comedy to keep him up; but the former he sometimes overdoes; the latter he permits to degenerate into a strut, and an affectation of Quin's voice; otherwise he may be justly allowed pre-eminent in his walk.

Mr. Smith's figure is very pleasing; and his performance very tolerable: his voice is agreeable, but he wants variety, and speaks always in the same tone.

Mr. Dyer is a pleasing Actor, and claims applause in several characters in Comedy.

He

He ſhines moſt in Dick in the Confederacy, Modely, Count Baſſet, &c. in ſome ſcenes of Clodio, and Tom in the Conſcious Lovers; nor does he want merit in Macbeath; but has not weight ſufficient for Chamont, or Romeo, &c. Theſe characters, beſides a critical judgment, require expreſſive features, and a marking eye, which he wants. Would he keep to Comedy alone, he would ſhew his genius to greater advantage.

It would be unpardonable negligence not to mention Mr. Arthur's great excellence in the clowns in pantomimery; but I cannot help ſaying, that when he ſpeaks, I forget all his merits.

Mrs. Bellamy has all the ſoftneſs of her ſex, and that ſweet ſenſibility which gives the moſt affecting pathos to the tender parts in Tragedy. Monimia, Juliet, and Cordelia, as ſhe repreſents them, have every thing that is engaging in beauty or innocence; and there her performance is the more pleaſing as it ſeems to be dictated by nature alone. Parts of violence are too ſtrong for her powers; and her voice and look muſt loſe their effect in painting

ing the rage of Alicia, Hermione, or Zara. But in thoſe of love, and tender diſtreſs, ſhe is ſecond only to Mrs. Cibber.

Mrs. Hamilton, formerly Mrs. Bland, appears in a very elevated light in Queen Elizabeth; the dignity and ſpirit of which ſhe really ſupports very properly. Her Charlotte, in the Lady's Philoſophy, is not without its admirers; but I muſt be free enough to tell her, that Lady Wrangle would now ſit upon her with more eaſe. She has vivacity in Elvira in the Spaniſh Friar; and I ſhould think it a high entertainment to ſee her perform in it along with Quin; who, in the Friar, was inimitable; and I dare ſay equalled Tony Leigh, whoſe picture in the character, by Kneller, was the Earl of Dorſet's favorite, and to whoſe talents Dryden uſed to ſay, the piece owed much of its ſucceſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

A short history of the Irish Theatre; and an account of the principal Performers.

THOSE who are versed in the Irish language will tell you, that it is extremely musical, and admits of variety of poetical modulations. This we are certain of, that every noble family had its bard and its jester; from which they derived either serious or ludicrous entertainments, according to their disposition of mind. Yet, tho' there are many good poems extant in that language, we have not been able to find any that are dramatic: nor, with our utmost enquiry, do we learn what was their taste for theatrical entertainments, till the latter end of the reign of the illustrious Queen Elizabeth, and the beginning of James the First; at which æra Shakespear's writings were in as high a degree of estimation in Dublin as in London. There being no regular Theatre, it was customary for the nobility to have Plays occasionally exhibited at their own houses; some of them were also performed in the ball-room of the castle of Dublin by the nobility, &c.

The firſt Theatre that was built in Dublin was in St. Werburgh's-ſtreet, about the year 1634, by Mr. Ogilby, who was at that time deputy-maſter of the revels of both kingdoms. I have been informed it had a gallery and pit, but no boxes, except one on the Stage for the then Lord Deputy, the Earl of Strafford, who was Ogilby's patron. The names of the Actors who performed in this Theatre, I could never learn; but they had good ſucceſs, particularly in 1638, with a new Play, called The Royal Maſter, wrote by Shirley, an intimate friend of the Manager's *. This Play was acted ſeveral times at the caſtle by the nobility and gentry. It is dedicated to the Earl of Kildare; as was alſo a Play, called Langartha, written by Henry Burnell, Eſq; and firſt acted on St. Patrick's day, in the year 1639; but the rebellion breaking out in 1645, the Theatre was ſhut up, and never afterwards opened. During the wars of that kingdom, Ogilby was reduced by various miſ-

* Shirley is ſaid to have been poſſeſſed of ſome ſketches of Beaumont's and Fletcher's. This in a great meaſure ſolves the manifeſt inequality of his pieces. I have been told, that this intelligence came from Dryden.

fortunes, and returned to England, where he remained till the year 1662; when his friends obtained him a renewal of a patent from his majesty for master of the revels in Ireland. On his return to that kingdom, he was very well received; and several of the nobility subscribed towards building a new Theatre in Smock-alley, of which he was master. It is said to have cost upwards of 2000 *l.* But his success not answering his expectations, he continued there but a short time, and returned to London, where he died in 1676.

Joseph Ashbury, Esq; had been appointed deputy-master of the revels under Mr. Ogilby, and superintended that Theatre till 1671, when a part of it fell down, and killed and wounded several of the audience. It is uncertain whether any Plays were performed there again, till after the Revolution; and the first Play we then read of was Othello, presented by some gentlemen for their amusement; for now there was no regular company in Dublin. Mr. Ashbury, who was the only Actor by profession among them, performed Iago, and the celebrated Mr. Wilkes, Othello, which was his first attempt; and the applause

he received at that time induced him to quit a very valuable employment, of which he was in poſſeſſion, and ever after to attach himſelf to the Stage. About half a year after, Mr. Aſhbury formed a regular company, which was greatly encouraged; and thoſe celebrated performers, Wilkes, Booth, Eſtcourt, Keen, Norris, Griffith, and T. Elrington, occaſionally appeared among them. This manager had great ſkill in dramatic affairs, was an excellent performer, and many of the firſt rate players were formed by him. The principal actreſſes in this company were Mrs. Aſhbury, a very amiable perſon, and of great merit in ſeveral characters, Mrs. Knightly, Mrs. Smith, and the celebrated Mrs. Butler, a great favorite of Charles the Second's, and one of the moſt eminent Comedians of her time. For her character, ſee C. Cibber's Life, page 121, vol. 1, 12mo.

This Theatre, under his prudent management, flouriſhed from the time of the Revolution to his death in 1720, without interruption; except that in the year 1701, on St. Stephen's day, the galleries gave way, and ſeveral were hurt in endeavouring to get out. This

was

was the firſt night that Shadwell's Libertine was performed in Dublin; and many ridiculous ſtories were told of this accident. Among the reſt, that the candles burned blue, and went out; two or three times there was a dancer extraordinary among the devils on the Stage, that nobody knew him, and that he had a cloven foot, &c. &c. It was this gentleman to be ſure that made free with the gallery; and ſeveral grave folks pronounced, with ſolemnity, that it was a judgment on the ſpectators for going to ſee ſo profane a piece of work. However, it was not performed again for near twenty years afterwards, when Mr. Aſhbury was dead.

Mr. Thomas Elrington, who was his ſon-in-law, ſucceeded him in the management of this Theatre, which he continued to his death in 1732. He was an Actor of great merit, both in Tragedy and Comedy, chiefly in Oreſtes, Bajazet, and Oroonoko. In the year 1732, a booth was opened in George's-lane, under the direction of Madam Violante, an Italian rope dancer, where ſeveral feats of activity of that kind were performed; but not meeting with the ſucceſs ſhe expected, ſhe

changed it into a play-houſe. Here it was that Mrs. Woffington made her firſt appearance in the character of Polly, in the Beggar's Opera. This lady has ſince ſtood in a capital light, both in Tragedy and Comedy, with a dignity in the former, and a polite deportment in the latter, that we deſpair of ever ſeeing equalled. Her Jocaſta was noble and ſpirited; her Jane Shore tender and diſtreſsful; her Lady Townly eaſy and elegant; her Phillis humorous and affected: ſhe had in her walk an eaſe, an air, and an underſtanding, for which we now ſearch the Stage in vain. The Theatre being ſuppreſſed by the Lord Mayor, a very genteel one was built in Ransford-ſtreet, by permiſſion of the Earl of Meath. Of this Mr. Huſbands was manager. The Theatre Royal in Aungier-ſtreet was opened in the year 1734, with the Recruiting Officer; but this being built more for ſhew than real uſe, it was ſoon deſerted; and on the 11th of December, 1735, the preſent one in Smock-alley was rebuilt by ſubſcription, and opened with Love makes a Man.

The City-Theatre, in Capel-ſtreet, was opened afterwards, January 7, 1744-5, with

The

The Merchant of Venice; but the ſucceſs here was not of long continuance; and it is now altogether neglected. A very elegant one is at preſent building for Mr. Barry in Crow-ſtreet, in that city, which will make the ſeventh that has been erected there ſince the year 1634; and is expected to ſurpaſs all the former in beauty and convenience.

Theſe are the moſt material accounts worth recording of the Iriſh Stage, which has produced ſo many capital performers; the inhabitants of that kingdom having been always remarkable for their encouraging the polite arts, and more eſpecially the Drama, of which they are good judges.

In 1711 Mr. Wilkes made a ſummer's excurſion thither, and ſtaid there three months; during which time he performed the character of Sir Harry Wildair for nineteen nights running at Smock-alley. In 1715 Jane Gray was performed ſeventeen nights ſucceſſively; in the year 1727 the Beggar's Opera had a run of twenty-four nights. In 1735 Henry the Eighth was played twelve nights at Aungier-ſtreet; and the Royal Merchant about

ſeventeen in Ransford-ſtreet. The profits of a Play thirty years ago in Dublin were thought good, if they amounted to 50 *l.* Farquhar, who, in the year 1707, played Sir Harry Wildair for his own benefit, received 100 *l.* and though the part was of his own writing, his friends bluſhed to ſee him act it: however, he thought himſelf well paid, becauſe his benefit far exceeded any thing that had ever been known in that city.

CHAP. V.

Of the Performers on the Iriſh Stage.

THE firſt of the Iriſh performers is Mr. Sheridan, a gentleman of a collegiate education, who was intended originally for the church; but fortune ordained that he ſhould raiſe contributions on the world in another character, and brought him on the Stage. He ſoon found the Buſkin preferable to the maſter's gown, and one night's benefit better than the annual income of a good vicarage. He ſet out with many diſadvantages; ſome of which he conquered by perſeverance and reſolution. He found the Dublin Stage at the loweſt ebb, without any

ſpirit

ſpirit in the people to ſupport it, or taſte in the Managers to raiſe it. He took the burthen upon himſelf, to which he ſoon ſhewed he was well adapted. He ſolicited his friends to ſtand by him; they thought him worthy of it, and they did. He was particularly obliged to the gentlemen of the college in which he was bred, though he afterwards quarrelled with them. He cleared the Stage entirely of thoſe *popinjays*, thoſe gilded butterflies, who uſed to ſtop up the entrances, and ſhew themſelves, their folly, and fine cloaths, plainer than the performers; a proceeding in which he was oppoſed by much want of manners, inſolence of wealth, and wildneſs of youth. By ſuch means he made his ſtage very regular; his decorations were in general proper, his cloaths elegant and in character, nor was his ſcenery and paintings bad. As a Manager it is allowed, even by his worſt enemies, that he is excellent; that he has ſome humour, appears in his Farce of the brave Iriſhman; and his Eſſay upon Education is regarded as a proof of his learning and ſkill in ſchool-diſcipline. When we come to conſider him as an Actor, we find, with regret, we cannot ſay as much in his favor. Nature has not been very

liberal

liberal to him in those practical gifts which are generally first regarded in that character. His voice is unequal, harsh, and discordant, and not sufficiently powerful to express the tender and pathetic of Tragedy, the delicate sensibility of Romeo, the fine tenderness of Anthony, or the workings of the relenting undone Varanes. Here, however just he may be in speaking, and in this his judgment never fails, yet his looks and action are unequal. However he may feel himself, he cannot convey it to his auditors: and old Cibber, in his Apology, justly remarks, "That "though the sentiments of a declaimer may "be accompanied with all the sublimity that "poetry can raise them to; let them be de-"livered too with the utmost grace and dig-"nity of elocution that can recommend them "to the auditor, yet this is but one light "wherein the excellence of an Actor can "shine;" and this may, in the course of his playing, be often applied to Sheridan. I remember to have seen him play Romeo, altered by himself, in which he took Mercutio's fine speech of,

Oh! then I see Queen Mab has been with you.

very

very unſeaſonably out of his mouth, and recited it with all the melancholy ſolemnity of a ſermon. I am ſure he muſt have ſeen the impropriety of making Romeo ſpeak a ſpeech which was intended for the gay Mercutio to divert his own gloom: but perhaps he had no performer then in his company whom he could entruſt with the ſpeech; and things conſidered in this, but in no other light, his performing the part of Romeo may be pardoned.

I doubt not but I ſhall ſee him in Friar Laurence, in which he would convey to us more pleaſure than we ever experienced even in one ſpeech; nor is ſuch a character beneath his notice. Betterton, Wilkes, Booth, and Cibber, have done ſome of as little conſequence; and Garrick at this day is in the ſame diſpoſition. I have honored his judgment when I have ſeen him reſign Anthony, and fall into Ventidius. The rough old ſoldier ſat well on him; and were he to give us Kent inſtead of Lear, we ſhould praiſe him ſtill more. Mr. Sheridan's genius tends to declamation, and ſpeaking that has weight in it; but here his figure is none of the beſt. By a view of it, one

one would think nature intended him for Comedy; but his attempt ſhews us we are deceived. His action is ſolemn, ſtiff, and confined, entirely void of that elegance and eaſe which is requiſite in a Lord Townly, a Dorimant, or a Sir Charles Eaſy; nor can he aſſume the ſprightly *degagée* air of an Archer, a Ranger, or a Benedict; but he makes up for theſe deficiences in his Tamerlane, his Cato, and his Brutus: the orations of the laſt were never better ſpoken. I remember to have ſeen him ſupport the loſs of Marcus in the former with all the reſignation and patriot deportment that the circumſtance enjoins. Hamlet is allowed to be his maſter-piece: it is a character into the ſpirit of which he enters; nor has he leſs merit in Horatio in the Fair Penitent; and he receives as much applauſe in replying to Lothario's appointing a place of duel,

I'll meet thee there,

as ever I heard. He deſerved it for that look of contempt he put on; the negligence with which he heard him were fine contraſts to the warmth which he had manifeſted in the cauſe of virtue and his friend. There are ſome parts of Macbeth and Richard the Third in which he has merit. He went through Œdi-

pus

pus happily. He poſſeſſed the tranſitions of the character, and particularly in the ſcene with Phorbas; his words, his action, and his look ſtrongly indicated the paſſions that raged and ruled by turns in the boſom of the unhappy prince.

I have heard his Falſtaff much condemned, perhaps not with injuſtice: he wants that feſtivity, that joy, which nature muſt have given an Actor who fills up this character, otherwiſe it will loſe its effects. Here old Quin was capital, and will perhaps remain for years unequalled. He was certainly Falſtaff in perfection; and in his playing it, he only ſhewed a copy of himſelf in his gayer hours. We ſhall conclude this character with obſerving, that in level-ſpeaking Sheridan is always juſt; that he is ſometimes happy in conveying horror and terror; and when he remains at home, he will, and muſt be always allowed excellence; but if he wanders into the walks of tenderneſs and genteelity, he exhibits defects that counterbalance all his perfections.

Mr. Dexter has a genteel figure, agreeable voice, an eaſy carriage, and good ſenſe. He has

has acquitted himſelf with applauſe in ſeveral parts of genteel Comedy; and ſome of thoſe he has attempted in Tragedy have been equally deſerving of it.

Mr. King, a ſprightly and uſeful Comedian, in ſome parts reminds us of Woodward. He has not as yet attained elegance ſufficient for the Foppingtons, or Fine Gentlemen: however, there are ſeveral characters which hit his humour and genius; among which are Sir Joſeph Wittol, Tom in the Conſcious Lovers, Braſs, Scrub, the Lying Valet, Pedlar in Florizel and Perdita, &c. in all which his performance muſt ever appear pleaſing.

Mr. J. Sparks is not only a uſeful but a very diverting Comedian: that pleaſantry of temper which is habitual to him will not admit him to give a falſe colouring to any humorous character. In the hearty Old Men of Comedy he has great merit, particularly in Sir Sampſon Legend. His Foigard is nearer to nature than any other performer's; but his Teague in the Committee has not the vivacity of Barrington's. In Foigard he is very expreſſive of that ridiculous gravity which is the

the reſult of pedantry and ignorance. He perfectly well ſupports all the oddity, wildneſs, and extravagance of Caliban. His Peachum and Serjeant Kite are humorous draughts of nature; and his merit lies in low Comedy.

Mrs. Fitz-Henry, on her firſt appearance, promiſed to arrive at excellence in a ſhort time; but her improvements are ſlower than were then expected. There is a caſt of parts ſuitable to her genius, and wherein ſhe has merit; ſuch as Hermione, Zara, &c. In Galiſta ſhe ſupports the violence of her rage, where ſhe tears the letter with great ſpirit; but afterwards fails in the diſtreſſes; and indeed in all characters of the tender or plaintive kind. Her action is too violent; and both that and her voice want that delicacy and tenderneſs which ſpeaks to the heart. She does not promiſe to excel in Comedy, wanting an eaſe and genteelity which in polite characters is abſolutely requiſite. Would ſhe modulate her voice, and regulate her action, it would add greatly to her excellence in Tragedy.

Before

Before I dismiss this account of the Irish Theatre, I must not omit Mr. Sowdon, who, during the two years that he was Manager of it, conducted it with great regularity. Considered as an Actor he has merit in several characters; and I believe his performance of Henry the Eighth to be as true a likeness of that monarch as Shakespear or history could draw him. I have seen him also judiciously pleasing in Pyrrhus, Venitidius, Old Batchelor, and Strictland; and he must be always considered as a performer of consequence in the theatrical world.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Usefulness of the Stage.

AMIDST all the fashionable amusements which have prevailed of late years in opposition to the Drama, the encouragement it still meets with is a convincing proof, that virtue, good sense, and taste, are yet to be found among us. As it has its foundation in reason, it will always find patrons of that character to improve and recommend it; and must at length prevail over those trifling amusements which have no connection

nection with either, and are calculated for such weak and vitiated appetites as cannot relish the exalted entertainments to which the Stage invites.

A just and refined taste in the public will have its due influence on the Stage. Was this more universal, the manager and actor would more strictly conform to it; and neither would introduce, or perform, what would not stand the test of truth and reason; and such as the audience is, such will always be the actor.

To have the springs of nature open to the soul, and to have the manners of mankind truly delineated, is the intent of the Drama. This cannot be effected, unless the audience will readily concur with the manager in promoting such theatrical pieces as will not only entertain the fancy, but mend the morals, and in discouraging those contemptible entertainments which, having nothing else but novelty and shew to recommend them, are too much the admiration of the gaping majority, till the lively lessons of moral instruction and example given by the Stage have influenced our understandings, and formed our manners

to a ſimilarity of thinking and acting; or, in other words, till we think and act like rational creatures.

The Drama, conſidered in this light, will be found to be of national advantage, and claim all poſſible indulgence and encouragement from the public. When this is the caſe, we, like our forefathers, ſhall be charmed with the tender touches of nature in Shakeſpear and Otway, the wit of Jonſon, and the ſprightly eaſe and genteelity of Fletcher; and, from the whole, derive both pleaſure and improvement.

Though ſome are apt to complain of the expences of our theatrical entertainments, yet on compariſon how inſignificant are they, compared to thoſe of our Italian Operas? Sorry I am to ſay, that I have known an Italian ſinger to have been paid more than double the ſum in a ſeaſon which our beſt performer has received. Is not this a prepoſterous preference of ſenſe to ſound, and unmeaning ſhew to nature and paſſion? To deſcend lower, have we not known the Stage to have been debaſed by wire-dancers, fire-eaters, ring-

ing

ing of hand-bells, men playing on broom-sticks, and tumblers climbing of ladders?

Old Shakespear's days could not thus far advance;
For what's his Buskin to our ladder-dance?

STEELE.

Such diversions were the reproach of common sense; and were better adapted to the taste of the rude rabble at Bartholomew Fair, than a polite English audience.

Among the various frequenters of the Theatre, and even some who are its professed admirers, there are yet but few who can be selected as real judges, and have formed their taste on that true idea of perfection which is founded in nature. Most borrow their judgment and ideas from others, perhaps as ignorant and tasteless as themselves, whose censure or applause is only dictated by whim and caprice, and to be regarded accordingly. Some of these fashionable and pretendedly polite gentlemen have I seen, who had such savage hearts, or weak heads, that they have sat with the most inelegant indolence and unsentimental feeling at the most affecting passages of the best of poets, represented in all their

beauty by the beſt of Actors; or, if they felt any tender natural emotion, they were aſhamed to diſcloſe what would have been their higheſt glory, that they were * men, and not ſtrangers to the diſtreſſes of humanity.

It was politely ſaid of one of the greateſt Generals † of his age, who was obſerved to be tenderly affected at the diſtreſs of Indiana, That he would fight ne'er the worſe for all that; and indeed he who could be ſo moved with an imaginary ſcene of private diſtreſs, diſcovered as true a greatneſs of ſoul as the warmeſt patriot does in the defence of his country.

I recollect an inſtance not unlike this, which happened once in a celebrated theatre. When Oreſtes had wrought himſelf up to the higheſt pitch of rage and phrenzy, one of the ſpectators catched the magical infection, and for a long time after did not recover his uſual way of thinking. If this man had not the ſtrongeſt underſtanding, he had at leaſt the

* Homo ſum, et nil humani a me alienum puto.
TER.

† Duke of Marlborough.

moſt

moſt feeling heart. Such are the effects of a well wrote, or well acted ſcene, on minds actuated by nature alone.

This tender ſenſibility in the fair ſex adds a double luſtre to their charms; and to ſee them ſhedding tears only at imaginary woe, heightens every beauty into a perfection of the moſt amiable kind, which at once attracts our veneration and love.

There is another ſpecies of unfeeling admirers of the Drama, who barter all ſolid ſenſe and reaſon of our own growth for a ſilly, ſtupid admiration of foreign productions; who fancy that they ſee more regular and correct beauties in the cold and ſtudied productions of foreigners, than in all the unfettered flights of our unrivalled Britiſh muſe. The real fire which animates our dramatic genius is too warm and too bright for their nearer view or examination; and whilſt our Stage boaſts of authors which Greece or Rome might envy, the limited ſtarved regularity of Corneille, Racine, and Moliere, is preferred by theſe witlings to that real language of nature which

our poets dictate, and to which our Actors give voice, motion, and action.

The feebleness of that language which we so much admire sinks under the weight of a bold and free sentiment. The tyranny and superstition of their government have infested their language with all that froth and slavish complaisance which we so heartily reject and despise as much in their Drama as in common conversation.

A truly poetical spirit is a spirit of liberty, which is the blessing of our nation and constitution. Should a poet of theirs by great chance hit upon a sentiment of the kind, it must be suppressed in silence, for fear of the resentment of the Grand Monarque, and punishment of his Bastile. I have often thought, and am not alone in my opinion, that if our admired poet was translated into their effeminate dialect, he would suffer considerably under their perpetual returns of languid rhyme, which would let all the spirit of his heaven-born genius evaporate, and only leave a *caput mortuum* of dead imitation behind. This will appear plainly to those who will take pains to com-

compare the French tranſlations of the Fair Penitent and Venice Preſerved with the originals, in which the greateſt beauties of both are omitted. By the way, let it be obſerved, that one of Shakeſpear's moſt envious defamers owes the chief part of his dramatic reputation to his numerous, but unacknowledged, plagiaries from this our great Ornament and Maſter of the Drama.

And I would remark in the laſt place, that as nature is always the ſame, though at different times ſhe may wear different aſpects; and as the firſt Dramatic Genius drew her as he found her, I ſee no reaſon why our Shakeſpear may not have as good a right to vary from, or reject, the antient model, by drawing from ſomething more grand and auguſt than had been before diſcovered. And I might add further, that as the Stagyrite drew his rules from a model or example ready drawn to his hands, I do not ſee for what reaſon they ſhould be impoſed as a perpetual rule or obligation for any future poet to obſerve, who had genius to ſtrike out new beauties and graces of his own ſuperior to, and undiſcovered by all former rules of art; which might ſerve

as a ſtandard and example for future poets and critics to follow.

Severe is the fate of the author and actor who is obliged to ſubmit to ſuch ſuperficial inſpectors. When an author has laviſhed away the whole ſtrength and richneſs of his genius in producing a work worthy of the public attention, and has embarked all his hopes of future fame and advantage on the attempt; when the actor too has endeavored to give the utmoſt grace to every idea, very often they are diſmiſſed without a hearing; or, if heard, with diſregard and contempt: the fair edifice is blaſted by envy, malevolence, or ignorance, and the author and his performance conſigned to perpetual obſcurity. To judge of the language, ſentiment, &c. of a new Play on ſeeing it once only, requires a degree of diſcernment, which very few are maſter of, though all pretend to be judges. Mr. Congreve * juſtly obſerves,

* It may be a matter of curioſity to inform the public, tho' it is not immediately pertinent to our ſubject, what this gentleman (who was ſo good a judge of true humour) eſteemed as the moſt diverting Comedy in the Engliſh tongue; and that was the Northern Laſs, wrote by Broome.

obſerves, that "Many come to a play ſo over-"charged with criticiſm, that they very often "let fly their cenſure, when through their "raſhneſs they have miſtaken their aim." One would think that the bare attempt to pleaſe, though unſucceſsful, has yet merit enough in it to demand a candid reception and fair hearing.

The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to the young actor, though it is allowed that his art

Broome. I have it from unqueſtionable authority, that he has often declared to his friends, he would rather be the author of that piece than of all he ever wrote; and had never miſſed ſeeing it for twenty years. Mr. Addiſon was of the ſame opinion. What the motive of their approbation was, I ſhall not determine; but perhaps the good performance of it was one. In the year 1711, the caſt of the parts were thus:

Northern Laſs, Mrs. Bicknell; Sir Philip Lucklefs, Mr. Wilkes; Tridewell, Mr. Mills; Sir Paul Squelch, Mr. Johnſon; Bullfinch, Mr. Eſtcourt; Widgin; Mr. Bullock; Captain Anvil, Mr. Spillar; Nonſenſe, Mr. Norris; Howdee, Mr. Cibber; Beavis, Mr. Bickerſtaff; Pate, Mr. Bullock, jun. Widow, Mrs. Knight. The Spectator, 468, gives a high encomium of Eſtcourt's performance of Bullfinch. This was formerly a ſtock-play; but has been neglected for ſome years.

is

is one of the most difficult of any; that few are capable of softening the soul with the tender touches of woe, of charming the heart with the harmony of nature, and calling those passions into action which before slept in the soul; and as, to accomplish all this requires such uncommon powers, such an actor is intitled to all the patronage and encouragement the public is capable of bestowing.

And it is to be lamented, that such a station, which requires to be filled up with such extraordinary talents, should be held in such disrepute by some, or be subject to the supercilious remarks of those nominal critics, who without the least knowledge of the Drama, and sometimes so destitute even of common literature, without an acquaintance with life, and its manners, and altogether strangers to the delicate sensations of the human heart, yet assume a right to judge of the merits or demerits of a performer, whose merits are perhaps as much beyond their comprehension as their blemishes are remote from their discernment.

To

To be a judicious critic of an actor's performance requires almost as much judgment as to be an actor. Their difference is only this; that the one has formed his judgment and idea of perfection on a comparison of those different characters and objects which have come within his observation: the other is obliged, by severe study and application, to inform himself of every thing which will give the appearance of truth and reality to his performance, and to reduce all his theory into practice.

Every dawning of merit in a young actor should be kindly nourished by the audience with its due proportion of applause, till it has attained perfection. Young blossoms bloom into maturity under a warm sun; cold winds destroy them; and envy, prejudice, and ignorance have damped the fire of many a promising genius.

I have often observed in the first appearance of a divine, or orator, fear has got the better of his abilities. The case is the same with the player. An absolute perfection should not therefore be expected at first: the best per-

performers are ſtill conſcious that they fall ſhort of it, and cannot act up to their own ideas. There ſhould be kind allowances made by all audiences for the involuntary failings of young, nay indeed of old actors. A variety of cauſes, moſt of them unknown, and what the audience have no concern with, may occaſion an actor to perform unlike himſelf on ſome occaſions; and when he has done his utmoſt, when his duty calls to diveſt himſelf of all connection with common life, and forget even his own being to aſſume a contrary character, it would be cruel to condemn him all at once, and to deprive him of all future reputation and advantage for a few unintended ſlips.

I know but of one caſe where an actor is inexcuſable; and that is where he is deficient in point of memory. Becauſe this, as has been formerly remarked, is the higheſt indignity that can be offered to his auditors; but as this negligence is commonly treated with the contempt it deſerves, it does not need any further remark.

On

On the other hand, many a promiſing actor has been ſpoiled by the ill-timed, injudicious applauſe of an ignorant audience; as a certain writer has obſerved, "it is more difficult to praiſe than to blame; becauſe it is eaſier to diſcover in people what may be turned into ridicule than to underſtand their merit." This has increaſed their ſelf-ſufficiency and arrogance, and made them greater in their own eyes than in the public's ever after. Several examples of this kind might be given, were it neceſſary.

It is not a little mortifying to ſome of our beſt actors to have their merits diſputed, and their predeceſſors preferred before them, as if human nature was not the ſame in all ages, and could not be as well repreſented now as by an actor who flouriſhed fifty years ago. This partial way of judging ariſes chiefly from the ideas formed in youth, which as they are the firſt, make the moſt laſting impreſſion; and thoſe perſons and objects which at firſt delighted us are always deareſt to our recollection. By theſe ideas their ſtandard of taſte and perfection is fixed; and ever after whatever varies from it, however excellent in its

kind, is either condemned, or but coolly approved of. Thus the fame of an actor, like that of a poet or painter, increases with time, his beauties still bloom in recollection, and his faults, like those of Homer or Shakespear, are too remote for candor to enumerate. When Booth flourished, Mr. Betterton was remembered with regret, as Hart had been before; and notwithstanding all their respective excellencies, there are some of opinion, that were it possible to see them in competition with our modern Roscius, the scale of merit would greatly turn in his favour, nature being now more than ever the standard of taste and perfection in the Drama.

Of all stations that of a Manager seems to be the most difficult, to fill with satisfaction to the public, to the persons under his direction, and to himself. Often it happens, that when he has done his utmost to serve the public in preparing an entertainment to their taste, and adapting it to the different geniusses of his performers, his most sanguine hopes are frustrated by the inconsiderate behaviour of some, who, void of all manners and decorum, and out of a particular pique to

ſome poor author, or actor, or for ſome other trifle of that nature, diſturb the public entertainment, and turn the Theatre, which is, or ought to be the School of Manners, into a Bear-garden. Such nuiſances of ſociety have often met with the treatment they deſerved; and it is a pity they ever eſcaped it.

The Manager, conſidered in his proper light, is the truſtee or conductor of the moſt rational amuſements of the public. If all who are fond of the Drama, and who are deſirous of ſeeing order and decency preſerved in it, will protect him in his ſtation, and concur with him in promoting ſuch entertainments as are worthy of it; then may we expect to ſee the Stage a real School of Virtue, extending its inſtruction and uſefulneſs every where. The reformation will become general; virtue and good ſenſe will become faſhionable; and, if the player exemplifies the Scene in his moral conduct, he will be always eſteemed as an honourable and uſeful member of ſociety.

FINIS.